

INSIDE: GARGOYLES, SWAMP BEASTS, PHANTOMS, GHOSTS & ELVES

Rod Serling's

February 1982/\$2 14369

THE TWILIGHT ZONE

NEW JOURNEYS OF THE IMAGINATION
AND ALWAYS . . . THE UNEXPECTED

Magazine

**Reshape Reality in
'Playing the Game'**
by Gardner Dozois & Jack Dann

Interview:
**Terror-Film Director
Wes Craven**

Full-Color Preview:
'Swamp Thing'

Eight New Tales
by George Alec Effinger
Charles L. Grant
Richard Christian Matheson
and Others

Photo Tour:
**Manhattan's
Rooftop Monsters**

'The Voices of the Dead'

New!
**Records that transport you
to the Twilight Zone**

**Robert Sheckley on Books
Gahan Wilson on Movies**

'A Stop at Willoughby'
Rod Serling's Classic TV Script

**Show-by-Show Guide
to TV's 'Twilight Zone'**



ROD SERLING'S THE TWILIGHT ZONE MAGAZINE

FEATURES

February 1982

In the Twilight Zone	4
Other Dimensions: Books	Robert Sheckley 7
Other Dimensions: Screen	Gahan Wilson 10
Other Dimensions: Music	Jack Sullivan 13
TZ Interview: Wes Craven	Tom Seligson 45
Screen Preview: 'Swamp Thing'	James Verniere 51
The Gargoyles of Gotham	Stephen DiLauro and Don Hamerman 55
Show-by-Show Guide to TV's 'Twilight Zone': Part Eleven	Marc Scott Zicree 83
TZ Classic Teleplay: 'A Stop At Willoughby'	Rod Serling 89

FICTION

Playing the Game	Gardner Dozois and Jack Dann 16
Essence of Charlotte	Charles L. Grant 21
"Other"	Jor Jennings 26
My Old Man	George Alec Effinger 32
The Other Train Phenomenon	Richard Bowker 42
Holiday	Richard Christian Matheson 63
Top of the Stairs	Stephen Schlich 66
The Voices of the Dead	Leslie Horvitz 70

Cover art by John Oberdorf, courtesy The Will Stone Collection

16



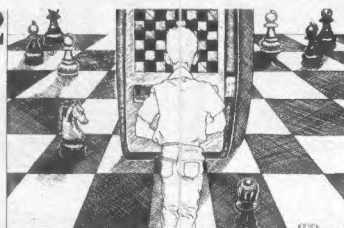
21



26



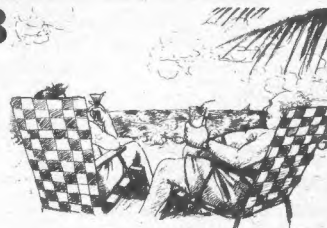
32



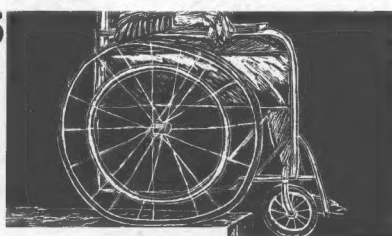
42



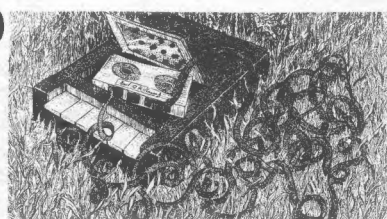
63



66



70



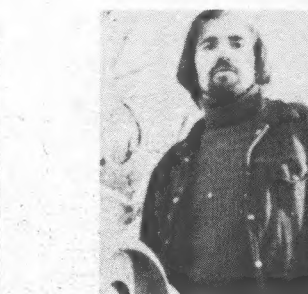
A word or two of explanation . . .

... is sometimes in order when a story is difficult or just plain unusual. Like *My Old Man*, for instance, by **GEORGE ALEC EFFINGER**, which is funny and touching, but also quirky and impossible to classify—as is almost everything else that this talented writer has produced, from the 1972 novel *What Entropy Means to Me*, nominated for a Nebula, to the recent *Wolves of Memory* from Putnam.

When we first read *My Old Man*, we were somewhat puzzled by the brief italicized questions which preceded each section of Effinger's narrative. These, he informed us, were taken from the TAT or Thematic Apperception Test, a series of photographs and questions used by many psychologists in conjunction with—or sometimes instead of—Rorschach's inkblots. "It's supposed to elicit from a subject feelings which may not come out in an interview or in other tests," Effinger explained. "It indicates that my narrator is seeking psychological guidance of one kind or another." Though the test itself has no direct connection with the story, the questions do seem to work stylistically the way a series of epigraphs might: as a kind of emotional punctuation.

We were also a little uncertain about the meaning of the story's closing lines (and don't worry, we're not about to give anything away, it's not that sort of tale). Writing back in answer to our query, Effinger had this to say:

"*My Old Man* was inspired by the Hemingway story of the same name, and the final two lines are the same as Hemingway's. They refer (a) to the stories the narrator's mother and aunt were telling, which had the effect of robbing him of the last bits of respect he had for his father; and (b) at the same time, to the people or events which, throughout our lives, force us to admit that we really don't know what we're talking about or what we truly feel. I think we all, at times, must reevaluate our feelings toward someone, and realize that this person was never the monster or angel we imagined. Too often this coming to terms happens after that person has died, which leaves us with guilt and regret. My



Effinger



Dozois



Dann



Grant



Matheson



Jennings



Horvitz

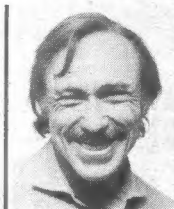


Schlich

own father died last summer, and my feelings toward him are exactly those of the narrator. The belt business is absolutely true. Although I hope no one views *My Old Man* as strict autobiography, I did write it as a way of sorting out my emotions. I had fun with the story, but it was also a very therapeutic experience."

We think you'll have fun with it as well, and that it will move you—even if you can't follow the chess.

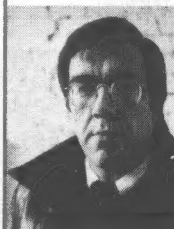
You'll also be moved, we think, by *Playing the Game*, a highly original cautionary tale by **GARDNER DOZOIS** and **JACK DANN** about the dangers of not leaving well enough alone. We last saw the Dann-Dozois byline on a memorably bizarre short-short in



Sheckley



Sullivan



DiLauro



Hamerman

Playboy; the two have also edited the sf collections *Future Power*, *Aliens!*, and, most recently, *Unicorns* (for Ace Books). Both are, on their own, widely anthologized storytellers. Dann has written the novels *Starhiker* and *Junction* (he's now completed a third, *The Man Who Melted*) and is the editor of Doubleday's *More Wandering Stars: An Anthology of Jewish Fantasy and Science Fiction*. Dozois has a new novel from Pocket Books, *Nottamun Town*, and, until recently, edited Dutton's *Best Science Fiction* annual.

CHARLES L. GRANT has been even more prolific of late; a stroll down the aisles of your nearest sf/fantasy bookshop (What? You don't have one? New York just acquired its fourth) will reveal two current novels, *The Grave* (Popular Library) and *A Quiet Night of Fear* (Berkley), two collections of his work, *A Glow of Candles* (Berkley) and *Tales from the Nightside* (Arkham House), and two anthologies he's edited: *Horrors* (Playboy Press) and *Shadows 4* (Doubleday). *Essence of Charlotte* marks his third appearance in *Twilight Zone*; we trust there'll be many more.

You'll also be seeing more, in future TZs, of **RICHARD CHRISTIAN MATHESON**, who, at twenty-seven, has what sounds like a lifetime of Hollywood experience behind him. He saw the televising of his first tv script (for a sitcom called *Another Day*) when he was twenty-two, and since that time he's collaborated on dozens more for shows such as *Three's Company*, *B.J. and the Bear*, *CHiPs*, *Sheriff Lobo*, and *Quincy* (for which he's also worked as executive story editor). Among his recent projects is a mystery for the theater, cowritten with his father, Richard Matheson.

JOR JENNINGS, author of "Other," had at one time thought of titling this punning tale "Fay Tally," and wants it known that the story's ending is a happy one, considering what we learn of her heroine's home life. (Once again, don't worry; we haven't given anything away.) With fiction in *Galaxy* to her credit, this Californian's own life is considerably different from that of her character; she describes herself as a natural history buff with an easy-care husband (a lawyer) and a self-

sufficient son (a graduate student in physics). "In addition to two out of the three R's," she says, "I enjoy outdoor activities such as gardening (modified organic) and hiking in the mountains with our three dogs."

LESLIE HORVITZ—of a far more urbanized breed—has just returned from a trip around the world, much of it on such romantic vehicles as the Trans-Siberian Railway. He's the author of two novels, *The Jerusalem Conspiracy* (under a pseudonym) and a medical thriller called *The Compton Effect* (with H. Harris Gerhard). A new Horvitz-Gerhard collaboration, *The Donors*, will be published this month by NAL, and Horvitz will appear alone—under his real name—in Charles Grant's forthcoming *Shadows 5* anthology from Doubleday.

Born in Maine, **STEPHEN SCHLICH** now makes his home in a place that sounds, to these Eastern ears, only slightly less exotic than Vorontsovka—to wit, Coeur d'Alene, Idaho—and has, in his travels, suffered through the obligatory assortment of eccentric jobs, from mine surveyor to waterbed salesman, newspaper reporter, and dishwasher. He's had stories in *Mike Shayne*, in several anthologies, and in a men's magazine whose name he prefers not to mention.

We're pleased, with this issue, to print our first book column from **ROBERT SHECKLEY**, who'll be appearing in *Twilight Zone* each month now; our first-ever record column, this one from critic **JACK SULLIVAN**, a regular reviewer for the *New York Times*, the *Washington Post*, and the *Saturday Review*, and author of the Ohio University Press volume *Elegant Nightmares*, a landmark study of the English ghost-story tradition; and our first genuine photo-essay, courtesy New York-based art writer **STEPHEN DiLAURO** (whose most recent book, *Perillo, Artist of the American West*, appeared last fall) and photographer **DON HAMERMAN**, who, at our behest, climbed out onto the Chrysler Building's scaffolding, sixty-one stories above Lexington Avenue, to get the spectacular shot featured on page 60. This old town has seldom looked so beautiful.

—TK

THE TWILIGHT ZONE MAGAZINE

TZ Publications Inc.

S. Edward Orenstein
President & Chairman
Sidney Z. Gellman
Secretary/Treasurer
Leon Garry
Eric Protter
Executive Vice-Presidents

Executive Publisher:
S. Edward Orenstein
Publisher: Leon Garry
Associate Publisher and
Consulting Editor: Carol Serling
Editorial Director: Eric Protter

Editor: T.E.D. Klein
Managing Editor: Jane Bayer
Assistant Editors: Steven Schwartz,
Robert Sabat
Contributing Editors: Gahan Wilson,
Robert Sheckley

Design Director: Derek Burton
Art and Studio Production:
Georg the Design Group

Production Director: Edward Ernest

Controller: Thomas Schiff
Administrative Asst.:
Doreen Carrigan
Public Relations Manager:
Jeffrey Nickora
Accounting Mgr.: Chris Grossman

Circulation Director:
William D. Smith
Circulation Manager: Janice Graham
Eastern Circulation Manager:
Hank Rosen
Western Newsstand Consultant:
Harry Sommer, N. Hollywood, CA

Advertising Manager: Rachel Britapaja
Adv. Production Manager:
Marina Despotakis
Advertising Representatives:
Barney O'Hara & Associates, Inc.
105 E. 35 St., New York, NY 10016
(212) 889-8820
410 N. Michigan Ave., Chicago, IL 60611
(312) 467-9494
326 W. Rosa Dr., Green Valley, AZ 85614
(602) 625-5995
9017 Placido, Reseda Blvd., North Ridge,
CA 91324 (213) 701-6897

Rod Serling's *The Twilight Zone Magazine*, 1981, Volume 1, Number 11, is published monthly in the United States and simultaneously in Canada by TZ Publications, Inc., 800 Second Avenue, New York, N.Y. 10017. Telephone (212) 986-9600. Copyright © 1981 by TZ Publications, Inc. Rod Serling's *The Twilight Zone Magazine* is published pursuant to a license from Carolyn Serling and Viacom Enterprises, a division of Viacom International, Inc. All rights reserved. Second-class postage paid at New York, NY, and at additional mailing offices. Responsibility is not assumed for unsolicited materials. Return postage must accompany all unsolicited material if return is requested. All rights reserved on material accepted for publication unless otherwise specified. All letters sent to Rod Serling's *The Twilight Zone Magazine* or to its editors are assumed intended for publication. Nothing may be reproduced in whole or in part without written permission from the publishers. Any similarity between persons appearing in fiction and real persons living or dead is coincidental. Single copies \$2 in U.S. and Canada. Subscriptions: U.S., U.S. possessions, Canada, and APO—one year, 12 issues: \$22 (\$27 in Canadian currency); two years, 24 issues: \$36 (\$43 in Canadian currency). Postmaster: Send address changes to P.O. Box 252, Mt. Morris, IL 61054. Printed in U.S.A.

Books

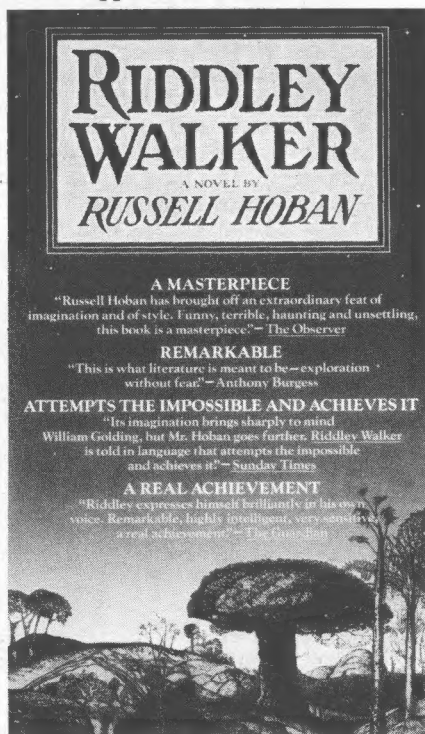
by Robert Sheckley

When I was in college, I had a definite idea of what a book reviewer was like. He was a man in his forties, wore a bow tie, lived in a seedy but genteel brownstone in Manhattan, and was surrounded on all sides by books. Books were his passion. He read them carefully, pondered them, weighed their pros and cons, and then made a considered opinion. He was always scrupulously fair, and he gave each book the attention it deserved. I figured if I ever became a reviewer that's the way I'd like to be.

Now I suddenly find that I *am* a book reviewer. I'd like to bring scrupulosity to this job, but I must explain what that means to me. Rather than claiming "objective" judgment—whatever that may be—I think it's important to acknowledge various subjective factors which may have nothing to do with the book, but which do influence its reviewing, since they influence its reviewer. What I'd like to do is to review these books honestly, dispassionately, and at the height of my intellectual powers, like the reviewer with the bow tie in the brownstone. But it's only fair to tell you that I may not be firing on all cylinders. I'm in a hotel room in Key West, on my way from nowhere to anywhere, and I'm wondering how to pay my bills and when I'll finish my own novel. In brief, unlike my model reviewer, I have problems. You ought to be glad I'm in as good a shape as I'm in, and not sitting around getting drunk like most of the people around me. Now that I've gotten that off my chest, let's get on with the books.

Riddley Walker, by Russell Hoban (Summit Books, \$13.95), is a bestseller and has also received a great deal of critical acclaim. Don't let that put you off. It's a fine book and the best science fiction novel to come along since Anthony Burgess's *A Clockwork Orange*. Riddley Walker, who tells his own story, lives in post-holocaust England. When the book opens, Riddley, age twelve, is about to become a

connection-man, replacing his father, who has just been killed in a mine cave-in. Riddley's job will be to interpret for his tribe the meanings, or connections, that he can elicit from the government's traveling religious puppet show. Things don't go as planned, and Riddley tells us what happens.



Apart from its excellence, *Riddley Walker* also resembles *Clockwork Orange* in its use of an invented language. This is at some cost to the book's readability. A lot of Hoban's language is more easily understood by ear than by eye. The book should be read word for word. The question arises, does Hoban have any right to demand this of us?

We turn to science fiction for nice escapist reading with a futuristic patina. Most of the work in the genre can be read rapidly and lightly. It can be understood on one fast reading, or even on half a fast reading. In fact, you can understand most science fiction novels with full comprehension while standing on a crowded subway with someone else standing on your foot and the lights going off and on. So where does Hoban get off, asking us to read

him slowly and sounding the words in our heads?

Well, he's got an entire world going there, and Hoban's invented language is what makes it possible. It's convincing as a future version of English, readable in the present day, and a subtle vehicle for expressing our hero's shadings of emotion. Here's an example of Riddley musing on events:

The worl is full of things waiting to happen. Thats the meat and boan of it right there. You myt think you can just go here and there doing nothing. Happening nothing. You cant tho you bleeding cant. You put your self on any road and some thing will show its self to you. Wanting to happen. Waiting to happen. You myt say, 'I dont want to know.' But lce its showt its self to you you *wil* know wont you. You cant not know no mor. There it is and working in you. You myt try to put a farness be twean you and it only you cant becaws youre carrying it inside you. The waiting to happen aint out there where it ben no more its inside you.

This is an after-the-bomb story of people returned to tribal savageness and trying to recover a world which is only legend for them now. It's the best post-holocaust story I've ever read. Hoban's invented religion is more believable than several real ones.

Roland Perry's **Program for a Puppet** (Pocket Books, \$2.95) is one of those intrigue-adventure-catastrophe novels that I hardly ever read. I did this time, and let me tell you, it's a page-turner. I was two hundred pages into the thing before I decided I didn't much like it, and by then it was too late, I was hooked, so I finished it. It's about a giant American computer corporation called lasercomp, whose motto is "Cogitate." Lasercomp manufactures and sells the world's fastest and most powerful computer, Cheetah, a gadget which gives us a decisive edge in weapons telemetry

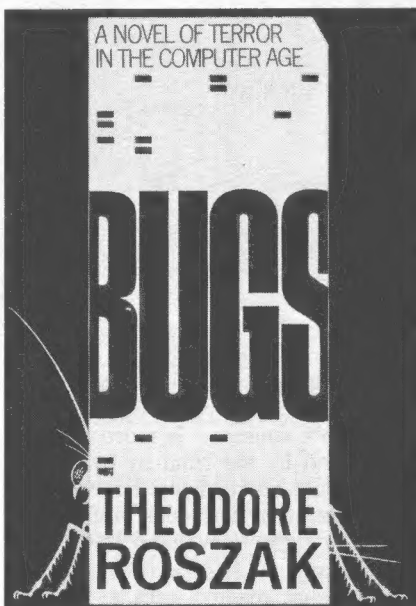
and gives Lasercomp a very nice profit indeed. Nothing wrong with that. What is wrong is mounting evidence that Lasercomp is knowingly selling these machines to the Soviets in vast quantities via obliging third parties. Journalist Ed Graham gets involved when his fiancée, also a journalist, is killed while checking out a Lasercomp story. Graham, an Australian, is a believable hero, not too macho or too sexy, but enough of both to get the job done. The story moves rapidly, there's intrigue, threat, or violence on every page, corruption is discovered in the highest places, and the whole thing gets more and more preposterous. But by the time you realize that, you're steaming along too fast to care. And anyhow, what is unbelievable these days? Are you absolutely sure a giant corporation wouldn't sell America down the river if it helped their profit picture? And what about those flying-saucer people who live in the apartment next door? I can't think of anything so far-fetched that, given a little documentation, a few million people wouldn't believe in it. In a pinch you could dispense with the documentation.

Incident crowds incident and assassins jostle each other to get on stage as the conspiracy reaches higher and higher, right up to the White House and Lasercomp's attempt to elect their own man (bought and paid for) as the next President. Unlikely? Look, you're sitting in the airport at Karachi, your plane's been delayed for five hours, there's no attractive woman to buy a drink for, you've read *Time* from cover to cover. *Program for a Puppet* will get you through this emergency. That is what it has been designed for.

Richard Lortz's *Lovers Living, Lovers Dead* (Second Chance Press, Sagaponack, NY, \$15.95) is a reprint of a 1977 novel published by Putnam's. It gets a good notice from Stephen King, who is quoted on the jacket as saying, "I haven't read a novel since *The Exorcist* where the psychological and the supernatural were hemmed together so neatly." I agree, and it's a neat way of saying it. *Library Review* says, "Awful. A fascinating study of dementia and

obsession." Yes, I agree with that, too. And the *Kirkus Review*: "Like skinny-dipping in a cesspool." Well, really now . . . But yes, I'm afraid you could say that, too.

On the surface, *Lovers Living, Lovers Dead* is a study of the troubled marriage between "normal" Michael and "strange" Christine. The lady does do some unusual things—like blowing away a treeful of starlings with a shotgun. (Not that she didn't have good reasons.) She's a little off-beat, but likable and real. And Michael's a nice guy. From this opening impression, Lortz puts his characters through changes increasingly strange, but believable and compelling. The tone of the book is by turns dreamlike and businesslike as you are led into mounting horror, ending at last with the big splatola. The ending may be what *Kirkus* was referring to, but it's a perfectly acceptable ending in this age in which the unthinkable is box office.



Theodore Roszak's *Bugs* (Doubleday, \$14.95) is blurbed "A Novel of Terror in the Computer Age." The premise: a new and superfast computer called The Brain begins to emit vast quantities of "bugs," or mite-sized insects. They are tiny, they bite fiercely, they burrow under the skin and stay there, nothing kills them, and they

can disappear as quickly as they come. When one of these bugs is finally captured, it turns out to have no fine structure, no internal differentiation whatsoever. Even at a level of magnification high enough to reveal molecular structure, the bug is still made up entirely of homogenous and undifferentiated white stuff.

The bugs attack intermittently, unpredictably. People are getting killed and the machines can't be manned. Other computer facilities are infected, and there's the threat of an enforced shutdown of the world's data-processing capability. Scientific investigation proves fruitless.

There's only one tenuous lead that Heller, the scientist-hero of this book, is able to follow: Daphne, a child, was one of a group of children to whom he was demonstrating The Brain. Without ever having seen one, Daphne drew a picture of a bug which looked exactly like the ones now gumming up the works. Daphne's mother, attractive Jane Hecate, is part of an esoteric cult called Earthrite. These people are "white magicians," they have various unspecified goals, vague but noble, and they sound like one of the Rudolph Steiner groups.

So we have two elements, both introduced early in the novel: bugs, apparently produced within computers, infecting more and more computers, threatening to shut down everything; and Daphne of the strange powers, and Jane, mother of Daphne, and Heller, would-be lover of Jane. The novel attempts to marry science and the occult—an important and fruitful union, but not too convincingly handled here. I would have enjoyed reading a lot more on that ultimate interface.

And what would our world be like without computers? Roszak says that we can't launch our bombs without them. Even worse, our paychecks would be held up indefinitely if not longer. There is also a hint, not pursued, that the bugs are being directed by some great and malevolent occult power, another interesting line which I wish Roszak had pursued. *Bugs*, despite my caveats, is a good novel that gets into some interesting areas. I can recommend it, but not highly. 17

Screen

by Gahan Wilson

Polyester (New Line)
Written and directed
by John Waters

Strange Behavior (World Northal)
Directed by Michael Laughlin
Screenplay by William Condon
and Michael Laughlin

One of the richest and most nourishing sources of renewal and inspiration for the fantasy and/or horror film *genre* (sometimes I can resist using that word, sometimes I can't) is the El Cheapo Rube Movie, produced on money scammed from relatives and loved ones, shot on location in the producer/director's home town, using locals who will act for free and totally unknown professionals who will act for very nearly the same. These shows, though always badly flawed, peculiarly paced and shakily focused, are very often meatier and vastly more imaginative than their megabuck-produced competition.

They are products of ardent lovers of the form, desperately ambitious and driven young people who have put themselves and, very often, their fathers and mothers into hock so that they can take a crack at scaring the shit out of people in darkened theaters and drive-ins. They are adorers of fiends and monsters, can rattle off every shot in sequence of their favorite Karloff flicker, and they think they can show the people who scared the shit out of *them* when they were little nippers a thing or two. Surprisingly often, they are right.

Probably the most respected example of these feats of horrific derring-do around is the first, and so far still the best (though I wait with considerable interest to see what he's cooked up with the legendary Stephen King) film of George Romero: *Night of the Living Dead*. It is, and will be for as long as anybody's interested in this sort of thing, a must-see for anyone wishing to style himself a connoisseur of the filmed macabre, and it is a classic example of El Cheapo, both in its drawbacks and its strengths.

The overriding talent of Romero is his ability to combine disgusting horror with genial good humor. Sometimes the jokes are lovingly



"... a classic example of El Cheapo, both in its drawbacks and its strengths." George Romero's 1968 film *Night of the Living Dead* opened with a zombie attack in a lonely cemetery.

designed to gross out the audience, (such as the police officer, having some difficulty making himself heard over the sound of zombies sucking the burnt, charred flesh from victims of an auto mishap and noisily gulping the tidbits down, commenting on the similarity of the event to a family backyard bar-b-q), and sometimes they are gentle little throwaways, such as not forgetting to tie a tag on the toe of the naked lady zombie, strayed from some morgue drawer.

The reception *Night* got, and gets, is typical of what an El Cheapo generally pulls, namely that any praise received (and for a film of this kind, it got an astonishing amount), tended to be on the grudging and defensive side. Critics, by and large, don't like to be thought of as the kind of people who sit through this sort of stuff.

In all reviews of El Cheapos it is carefully explained to the reader that the critic only happened to see the movie in the first place because he stepped into the theater to get out of the rain, and that the only reason he's being charitable about it is because he's extraordinarily perceptive and what you really ought to do is admire him for his ability to spot the little flashes of quality he's managed to make out in all that junk. But, after all, if you're going to make a movie about rotting dead people eating any part of live people they can grab, you're not acting in a very dignified fashion and can't expect critics to take you all that seriously.

The truth is that most of the people involved in making these things are only dimly aware of the mainstream critical establishment, if they're not ignoring it altogether.



"His most respectable movie to date..." In the new John Waters film *Polyester*, Franche Fishpaw (Divine) finds temporary happiness in the arms of Todd Tomorrow (Tab Hunter).

John Waters, the guiding hand behind the Divine movies, obviously couldn't care less. His most respectable movie to date, *Polyester* features a little card handed to the theatergoer which, if scratched appropriately by the fingernail, wafts out odors ranging from unclean armpits, to farts, to new car smell, and a filmmaker who will do that is not a man who will muffle his tears in his pillow if *The New York Times* does not compare him favorably to Ingmar Bergman.

The Divine movies are magnificent El Cheapos all. They take place in an atmosphere of complete chaos, moral and physical, and their mood is consistently and hilariously cynical, very much like *The Parenticide Club* stories of Ambrose Bierce. Nothing is sacred, manic selfishness is rampant, and the universe is some kind of loathsome botch on the part of a mad creator. Divine himself is clearly descended from W. C. Fields and works the same juicy themes loved so well by that master: horrible families composed of mutually hating hateful people, abortive criminal schemes, ghastly children plotting against their parents and being plotted against by them in turn. All of it's pushed a little further down the road, of course, but this is 1981, bless its little heart, and civilization has made considerable progress since the days of Uncle Willy. The sinister character created by Fields had no taste for dog excrement (as does the one built by Divine), he did not actually kill people (as does Divine), much as he wanted to, but

he did set the course, and Divine and Waters have followed it with great respect, flair, and gusto.

One thing that unites most El Cheapos, outside of their shared tackiness (they excel in horrendous Americana and are generally marvelously evocative of the more embarrassing aspects of the periods in which they were made), is their emphasis on adolescents. Commonly, the only characters in a film of this kind are adolescents, save for an occasional parent brought in to shake their heads over "kids these days," and a high school employee or two to be found bloodily murdered in the gym.

John Carpenter's *Halloween* is a very visible case in point, and a highly profitable example of the wisdom of tending to sympathize with the points of view of and feature the doings of humans suffering their teens, since humans suffering their teens are, by and large, the group that buys tickets to see this kind of stuff. *Halloween* has another feature, that sometimes come across in these films: that the hiring of one actor likely to be recognized and who will thus give the rest of the cast a kind of realness which they would ordinarily lack on their own. So we have Donald Pleasance in this movie as we had Whit Burnett as the mad doctor in both *I Was A Teenage Werewolf* and *I Was A Teenage Frankenstein*, two towering classics of the genre (there I go again).

Strange Behavior has no one on the Pleasance level of life-giving recognizability, but it does feature

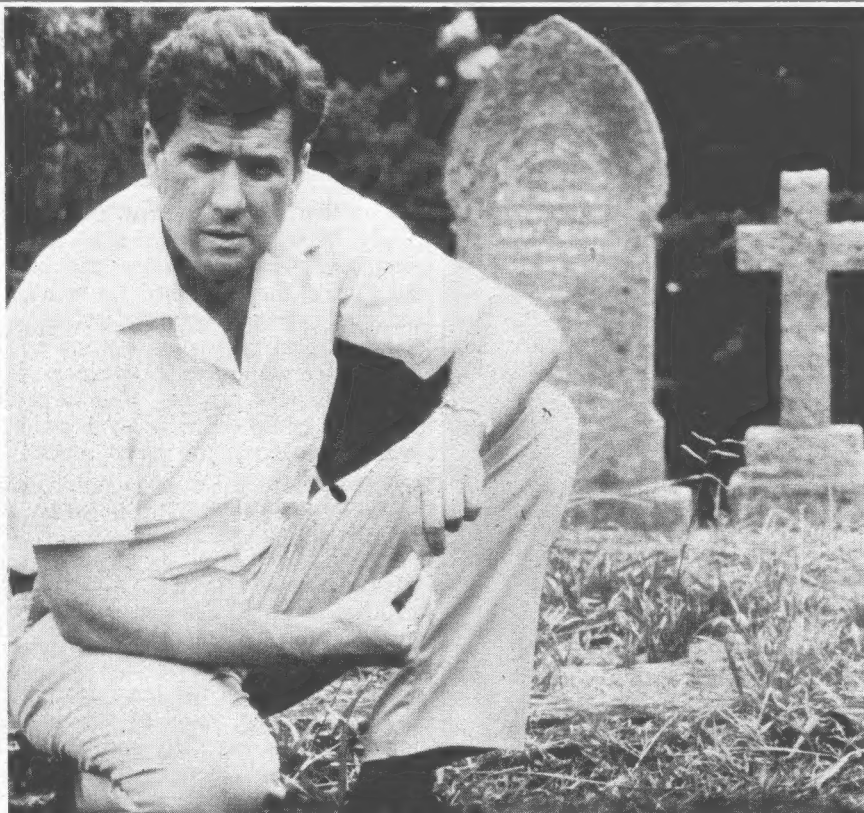
one on the Burnett level with Scott Brady, he who made such a promising start in *Dillinger* back in the Fifties, then vanished for years, and now pops up regularly in also-starring tough guy roles, getting a little fatter with each appearance. He is a reliable pro and when he shows up in *Behavior* as a cop come to help the Rubes the viewer nods and relaxes, knowing he is watching an actual bona fide movie picture, not just this thing.

In this, and in all its other aspects, *Strange Behavior* fully qualifies as an El Cheapo, and a good specimen of its kind. Not another *Texas Chainsaw Massacre*, perhaps, but it follows the rules, and in 2001, say, you'll be able to point to it and say, "By god, that's how it was back there in the Eighties!" and your grandchildren will give you this funny look.

It takes place in Galesburg, Illinois, birthplace of Carl Sandburg, hard by Peoria: a near perfect locale for a film of this kind! What place better than this chunk of heartland America to kill teenagers horribly, to do nasty experiments on their young bodies and forming minds? The camera dwells lovingly on Galesburgia throughout. Over and over we cross a bridge, say, until we feel as familiar with the look of that river as a genuine Galesburgian might, one who has traveled that way, back and forth, going to and fro from his split-level ranch house to his office downtown. We see the streets, the houses, we go into the houses and study the tastes of Galesburgians in kitchens and bedrooms and beer. We sense constant monotony.

The film was co-authored and directed by Michael Laughlin, and he knows his way around this art form as well as any. We start right out with a teenager goofing off from his homework with a forbidden filter cigarette and rotten music on his portable radio the instant his trusting parents leave the house, and then—serves him right!—he is horribly murdered, and that is how to start this kind of movie.

In some films of this kind the entire adult world is regarded with either disdain or fear, and every grown-up shown is either a fool or a menace, but *Behavior* takes a rather



"... a sympathetic soul, sorely tried by the steady accumulation of bloody cadavers." Michael Murphy, as lawman John Brady, takes a break from his manhunt amid "a good Midwestern graveyard with fat tombstones."

more tolerant line. The father type, who is also chief lawman of Galesburg, is played by Michael Murphy as a sympathetic soul, sorely tried by the steady accumulation of bloody cadavers, but doing his best. There are some nice character touches such as his wearing glasses only when he's carrying a gun with intent to kill, and not having a very strong stomach around a morgue. The mother type is sympathetic too, as is the mayor of Galesburg and practically all the other adult types with the notable exception of Dr. Parkinson, who is the fiendish lady running program 104 up at the college.

Program 104 is one of those mysterious things the government sponsors lavishly (or used to before Reagan) without seeming to ask many questions. It's all based on the brilliant work done by Dr. LeSage in psychological conditioning, and if you're a teenager they'll pay you hundreds of bucks if you'll let Dr. Parkinson experiment on you.

Parkinson is played by Fiona Lewis, and she does a good job of being tricky and mean one minute, and tricky and seductive the next. She has the meanest and biggest hypodermic needle in the world, and she sticks it in your eye socket, zips

it right past the eyeball, and its point is somewhere or other in your brain. Afterwards you piss blood, and if *that* doesn't make them pause in their popcorn-stuffing at the drive-in, then I give up.

An important aspect of the El Cheapo film is that it must have horrible things that can be passed on in whispers to friends who haven't seen the movie yet. It has to be something that will make their eyes bug and inspire them to go and see it for themselves. It's particularly good if it's nauseating, because then the whisperer can spring it on his chums when they're eating and make them sick. Often, very often, the whispered description is infinitely better than the actual movie, sometimes because the whisperer embroiders it, sometimes because he gets it wrong.

I remember being awed as a kid when a whisperer, fresh from *The Mummy's Hand*, described a scene where an archaeologist touches the monster's face as it lies in its coffin and, startled, cries out: "It feels just like *tissue paper*!" I can still feel the chill that went up my spine when I heard that, and the considerable disappointment when I finally managed to sneak off to forbidden Howard Street and found myself hearing the archaeologist

exclaim: "It feels just like *living tissue*!"

In any case, *Strange Behavior* is full of swell material for whisperers. What was in the coffin? What was the crazy fat girl doing that set the maid to screaming all over again? Stuff like that.

And the Americana aspect is in good form: there's a superbly dismal teenage hangout, Shake and Steak; there's a good Midwest graveyard with fat tombstones; any number of depressing offices and shops; and, of course, all kinds of cars and trucks and other roadiana.

The film could use a lot of cutting. There's a teenage dance party sequence that lasts almost as long as an actual party, but bad editing is to be expected in an El Cheapo. It's almost a necessary convention. The outstanding example in my experience was *The Ape*, starring Boris Karloff and filmed at possibly the nadir of his career. Karloff played a mad doctor who took to wandering around in a homemade ape suit in order to gather spinal fluid anonymously. The producers of the film didn't want us to miss a thing, and one was treated to endless tedious footage of Karloff driving his car, Karloff stopping the car and turning off its ignition, Karloff opening the car door, Karloff leaving the car, Karloff closing the car door, Karloff walking up the little path to his front door, Karloff unlocking the door, Karloff opening the door, Karloff going through the door, Karloff closing the door ... not once, mind you, but many times. Over and over.

So if you are a teenager with a car (or one you can borrow from your parents), go ahead and take it and a girl to the drive-in and see *Strange Behavior*. Buy lots of candy. I would suggest caramels covered with chocolate, and plenty of popcorn. You will have a fine time. If you're a grown-up and being stuffy about it, I'd skip the movie. If you're a little kid I think it'd be a swell idea if you snuck off to Howard Street and saw *Strange Behavior*. It'll scare the shit out of you and then when you grow up you'll make another one just like it, or maybe better. I wish you luck. 17

Music

by Jack Sullivan

Whatever one thinks of Stanley Kubrick's controversial *The Shining*, there is little doubt about the quality of the film's surpassingly eerie music. From the opening—the medieval church motif “Dies irae,” or Day of Wrath—to the more contemporary edginess of Bartok's *Music for Strings, Percussion, and Celesta*, Kubrick scores his film masterfully, creating a truly fearful atmosphere—one which, ironically, is seldom matched by the action on the screen. Kubrick displayed even more aural astuteness in *2001*, musically one of the grandest films of all time.

What is interesting is that Kubrick's great movie music is not movie music at all. Actually, he was by no means the first director to discover that “serious” composers often had a taste for the macabre, and that their music made an appropriate accompaniment to scenes of supernatural horror. William Friedkin enhanced *The Exorcist*'s ominous mood with a Penderecki string quartet; when director Edward Ulmer wanted Boris Karloff to do something that would unnerve even Bela Lugosi in *The Black Cat*, he had Karloff play the opening of Bach's Toccata and Fugue in D Minor on the organ; and of course, one of the most powerful episodes of Walt Disney's *Fantasia*—the black sabbath, with its swirling and plummeting demons—was inspired by Mussorgsky's *Night on Bald Mountain*, quintessential demon music.

But what of the many spectral masterpieces that have not been popularly exploited and are decidedly less familiar? As it turns out, there are a vast number of these—more, certainly, than can be covered in a few columns. My purpose here is to familiarize the reader with the landmark masterpieces of weird music, as well

as a sampling of equally gripping but more exotic and rarefied works. I will also suggest recordings, from budget to digital, which offer superior performances for those interested in building a collection of this fascinating music, music that lifts us out of the everyday and puts us in touch with the uncanny.

Although numerous symphonic and chamber pieces contain frightening passages, what we are concerned with is music that has as its dominant goal the creation of a spectral, unearthly world, a world that is somehow—either subtly or violently—disturbing. In this respect, we don't really have a weird

expropriated in many horror films (such as *Horror Hotel* and *The Omen*) to suggest the invocation of Satan. They were originally meant, of course, to invoke Christ.

The first genuine example of horror music is technically Berlioz's *Symphonie Fantastique*. Composed in 1828-30, this musical depiction of an opium trip culminates in a “Dream of a Witches' Sabbath,” the grotesqueness of which was clearly meant to shock. The listener should be warned, however, that only the finale strikes this satanic note, and that even this movement is partly given over to an amusing self-parody of the composer's own

*My purpose here is to
familiarize the reader with the
masterpieces of weird music
... music which lifts us out of
the everyday and puts us in
touch with the uncanny.*

tradition in music until the nineteenth century. To be sure, marvelously phantasmal moments appear in earlier pieces, such as some of Bach's keyboard works, the Beethoven “Ghost” Trio, Mozart's *Don Giovanni*, or even Mozart's Requiem, but they usually vanish before a consistent atmosphere has had time to build.

Ironically, some of the most creepy pre-Romantic music, at least to our modern ears, comes from the medieval period, but it was clearly not meant to sound that way. The masses of Machaut, Tournai, and others have a peculiarly hollow, austere sound that has been

Romantic themes. For our purposes, the best performance is Herbert von Karajan's newest version (Berlioz, “*Symphonie Fantastique*,” Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra: Deutsche Grammophon 2530597), which sounds most in touch with the forces of darkness and which boasts an awesome tolling bell—no small consideration, given the pathetic ding-a-ling in most other versions.

Berlioz's Requiem, with its apocalyptic brass and timpani, also contains moments of hair-curling terror (Berlioz, “*Requiem*,” Colin Davis, London Symphony Orchestra: Philips 670019). To my ears, though, the first full-blown

demonic work in Western music comes not from him but from Franz Liszt, a composer who, like Berlioz, was as notorious in his day for his art as for his amours. Liszt's *Todtentanz for Piano and Orchestra* (1859), like Berlioz's *Symphonie*, quotes the medieval "Dies irae" theme. Liszt uses the theme not to parody it but to invoke Death. According to one of Liszt's biographers, James Huneker, the composer was inspired by a Florentine fresco and envisioned Death as "a fearsome woman, with hair streaming wildly, with clawed hands. She is bat-winged, and her clothing is stiff with mire. She swings a scythe, eager to end the joy and delight of the world." Liszt's music, a set of thirty variations on "Dies irae" is every bit as vivid as this description. From the first grimly percussive piano chords—an opening that prefigures Bartok—to the final descent into the abyss, this "Dance of Death" has a hair-raising intensity like nothing previously attempted. Liszt once called *Todtentanz* a "monstrosity," and its grotesquerie is most tellingly captured by pianist Andre Watts and conductor Erich Leinsdorf—a frenetic, truly Lisztian performance (Liszt, "*Todtentanz for Piano and Orchestra*," London Symphony Orchestra: Columbia M-33072)—and by Alfred Brendel and Bernard Haitink in a more somber, medieval reading (London Philharmonic Orchestra: Philips 6500374).

Liszt's predilection for the spectral is also apparent in his revolutionary late piano pieces from the 1880s (Liszt, "*Late Piano Music*," Alfred Brendel: Philips 9500775), some of which have a harmonic audacity bordering on the atonal. The titles of these spooky little gems ("Gray Clouds," "Evil Star," "The Lugubrious Gondola") suggest their disquieting moods. Surely these are the first impressionistic piano pieces. Compared to them, the more famous "Mephisto Waltz" (1861)—featured in the 1971 film of the same name, based upon the Fred Mustard Stewart novel—seems a bit tame (the orchestral version even more so), but this may be partly a function of overcautious modern performances. A marvelous

corrective is the new Vladimir Horowitz version (Liszt, "*The Mephisto Waltz*," The Horowitz Concerts 1978/79: RCA

ARL-3433), a wild, decidedly uncautious affair (with numerous extra notes thrown in) that is exactly in the Lisztian spirit.

The phenomenon of Liszt's forward-looking dissonances brings into focus an important reason why spectral music did not come into its own until this period. A certain amount of dissonance—the addition to notes other than those in the conventional three-note triad—seems necessary to produce a genuinely disturbing effect on a sustained basis. This is why Beethoven's storm in the *Pastoral Symphony* is less menacing as a storm than Debussy's in *La Mer*.

It is also why medieval composers seem so peculiarly grim: their stark parallel fifths and octaves were "dissonant" because they had not discovered the third. Once

When modern composers began experimenting with more radical dissonances, from ninth and thirteenth chords to bitonality and atonality, all hell broke loose and a whole new spectrum of weird effects was created.

Renaissance composers filled in the mellifluous third—and the Pope banished parallel fifths as works of the Devil!—the interval disappeared until the nineteenth century, when Berlioz, Liszt, and others revived it for horrific effects. When modern composers then began experimenting with more radical dissonances, from ninth and thirteenth chords to bitonality and atonality, all hell broke loose and a whole new spectrum of weird effects was created.

The significance of dissonance becomes quickly apparent if we compare the original version of Mussorgsky's *Night on Bald*

Mountain with Rimsky-Korsakov's cleaned-up reorchestration. The original, considered illiterate by Mussorgsky's contemporaries and not even published until 1968, is finally available on a revelatory London Symphony disc conducted by Claudio Abbado (Mussorgsky, "*Night on Bald Mountain*": RCA ARL1 3988). It is altogether more orgiastic and ghoulish than the "corrected" version, and one of the reasons is its bolder harmonies.

The more sumptuous Rimsky-Korsakov arrangement is best served in the exquisite Lorin Maazel digital version with the impeccable Cleveland Orchestra (Telarc DG 10042). On the same record is an absolutely stunning account of Mussorgsky's *Pictures at an Exhibition* that will rattle your walls and endanger your speakers though you can find an excellent budget version featuring René Leibowitz and the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra (Mussorgsky, "*Pictures*

at an Exhibition": Quintessence 7059). This epic work was originally for piano (Mussorgsky, a chronic alcoholic, never got around to orchestrating it), but it was expertly transcribed for orchestra by Maurice Ravel. Not all these "pictures" depict the unearthly, but enough of them do—including portraits of a gnome, a giant ox, a witch, and a vast pile of "illuminated" skulls in a catacomb—to make this visionary work a major one in the field.

In his vocal music, such as the "Songs and Dances of Death," Mussorgsky was also fond of sounding the spectral note (Mussorgsky, "*Songs and Dances*

Ironically, some of the most creepy pre-Romantic music, at least to our modern ears, comes from the medieval period, but it was clearly not meant to sound that way.

of Death." Galina Vishnevskaya: Angel S-37403). To Debussy, Mussorgsky inhabited "those magic landscapes so special to a child's mind"; to H. L. Mencken, he inhabited "a world that must always appear charming and more than half fabulous to western eyes ... a world of occult motives, exotic emotions, and bizarre personalities—in brief, the old Russia that went down to tragic ruin in 1917."

Another Russian composer immersed in this occult world was Alexander Scriabin. One of music's oddest eccentrics, Scriabin wanted exotic lights and even odors to permeate the hall during his music. His stated goal was to "resurrect all monsters and visions of the past." The most diabolical of his more ambitious works is *Prometheus: The Poem of Fire* (1911), a gigantic piece for piano, orchestra, and a wordless chorus in white ritualistic robes. Several sequences sound delightfully akin to 1950s and '60s spectral music, especially music for *Alcoa Presents* and *The Twilight Zone*. Like many of his late works, *Prometheus* is based on a single "mystical chord," one wonderfully suspended and ambiguous, which Scriabin "verticalizes" into themes. The piece begins with pianissimo gongs and ends in a veritable orgasm that Scriabin wanted accompanied by a white light that would be "painful to the eyes." The spectacular performance by Vladimir Ashkenazy, Lorin Maazel, and the Ambrosian Singers is a must (Scriabin, "*Prometheus: The Poem of Fire*," London Philharmonic Orchestra: London 6732).

Scriabin's late piano sonatas are equally fearsome ("an eruption of blasphemous darkness," wrote one critic), especially the fifth, seventh ("The White Mass"), ninth ("The Black Mass") and tenth. Ashkenazy and Horowitz both deliver magnificent performances, but my first choice is Horowitz, who played for a dying Scriabin in 1915 at the age of eleven and who seems to have this strange music in his blood. Listen to the way he projects the fortissimo trills in Sonata No. 10.

Can any other pianist produce such an electrifying sound? (Scriabin, Sonata No. 5, Horowitz: RCA ARL1 1766. Sonata No. 7, Ashkenazy: London 7087 [also contains Sonata No. 10]. Sonata No. 9, Horowitz: 2-Columbia M2S-728. Sonata No. 10, Horowitz: Columbia M-31620).

Another important Russian composer is Igor Stravinsky, partly for his late music (to be covered in a future column), but chiefly for his epoch-making *Le Sacre du Printemps* (The Rite of Spring). With its driving, complex rhythms and pounding dissonances, *Le Sacre* did more to change the course of music than any other single piece. According to Stravinsky, it was inspired by a "fleeting vision" of a "solemn Pagan rite: sage elders, seated in a circle, watching a young

girl dance herself to death." This was the most outrageously frenzied music ever presented to a civilized audience, and it is small wonder that it caused a full-scale riot at its 1913 Paris premiere. There are numerous technically proficient recordings of *Le Sacre*, including authoritative ones by Claudio Abbado (Stravinsky, "*Le Sacre du Printemps*," London Symphony Orchestra: Deutsche Grammophon 2530635), Pierre Boulez (Cleveland Orchestra: Columbia MS-7293), and Leonard Bernstein (London Symphony Orchestra: Columbia M-31520), but the only one that comes close to delivering the cataclysmic impact it can have in live performance is the Maazel digital version (Cleveland Orchestra: Telarc DG 10054). Set at even normal volume levels, this superbly realistic recording will put you in danger of eviction.

Next month: Impressionists and Atonalists. 17



Photo by Lars Aström

East Africa is crying for help

One of the most serious human tragedies in the world continues to unfold in East Africa, where famine, conflict, and the worst drought in years have brought more than 12 million people close to starvation. More than half of those in danger are children—children who are crying out for their very lives.

As it has in so many past emergencies, UNICEF, the United Nations Children's Fund, is responding to this crisis while continuing its regular program commitments in 46 African countries.

In Somalia, where one out of every four persons is a refugee, UNICEF has helped to train over 1,000 refugee health workers and is coordinating a program to provide clean drinking water and sanitation in 25 camps. Emergency food is being rushed to millions of drought victims in Ethiopia; and in Uganda, where countless lives already have been lost, an emergency feeding program is now under way. For Djibouti's suffering children, UNICEF is providing vaccines and other supplies and is undertaking a major water supply program.

UNICEF will continue to help. But how many children are saved, and how soon, depends on the concern and action taken by citizens of the world. Please help by giving generously to:

UNICEF East African Relief

331 East 38th Street, New York, N.Y. 10016 (212) 686-5522
Or contact your local UNICEF Committee



Playing the Game

by Gardner Dozois
and Jack Dann

THE ARENA WAS INSIDE HIS SKULL . . . AND AS WIDE AS THE WORLD.

The woods that edged the north side of Manningtown belonged to the cemetery, and if you looked westward toward Endicott, you could see marble mausoleums and expensive monuments atop the hills. The cemetery took up several acres of carefully mown hillside and bordered Jefferson Avenue, where well-kept wood-frame houses faced the rococo painted headstones of the Italian section.

West of the cemetery there had once been a district of brownstone buildings and small shops, but for some time now there had been a shopping mall there instead; east of the cemetery, the row of dormer-windowed old mansions that Jimmy remembered had been replaced by an ugly brick school building and a fenced-in schoolyard where kids never played. The cemetery itself, though—that never changed; it had always been there, exactly the same for as far back as he could remember, and this made the cemetery a pleasant place to Jimmy Daniels, a refuge, a welcome island of stability in a rapidly changing world where change itself was often unpleasant and sometimes menacing.

Jimmy Daniels lived in Old Town most of the time, just down the hill from the cemetery, although sometimes they lived in Passdale or Southside or even Durham. Old Town was a quiet residential neighborhood of whitewashed narrow-fronted houses and steep cobbled streets that were lined with oak and maple trees. Things changed slowly there also, unlike the newer districts downtown, where it seemed that new parking garages or civic buildings popped out of the ground like mushrooms after a rain. Only rarely did a new building appear in Old Town, or an old building vanish. For this reason alone, Jimmy much preferred Old Town to Passdale or Southside, and was always relieved to be living there once again. True, he usually had no friends or school chums in the neighborhood, which consisted mostly of first- and second-generation Poles who worked for the Mannington shoe factories, which had recently begun to fail. Sometimes, when they lived in Old Town, Jim-

my got to play with a lame Italian boy who was almost as much of an outcast in the neighborhood as Jimmy was, but the Italian boy had been gone for the last few days, and Jimmy was left alone again. He didn't really mind being alone all that much—most of the time, anyway. He was a solitary boy by nature.

The whole Daniels family tended to be solitary, and usually had little to do with the close-knit, church-centered life of Old Town, although sometimes his mother belonged to the PTA or the Ladies' Auxiliary, and once Jimmy had been amazed to discover that his father had joined the Rotary Club. Jimmy's father usually worked for Weston Computers in Endicott, although Jimmy could remember times, unhappier times, when his father had worked as a CPA in Johnson City or even as a shoe salesman in Vestal. Jimmy's father had always been interested in history, that was another constant in Jimmy's life, and sometimes he did volunteer work for the Catholic Integration League. He never had much time to spend with Jimmy, wherever they lived, wherever he worked; that was another thing that didn't change. Jimmy's mother usually taught at the elementary school, although sometimes she worked as a typist at home, and other times—the bad times again—she stayed at home and took "medicine" and didn't work at all.

That morning when Jimmy woke up, the first thing he realized was that it was summer, a fact testified to by the brightness of the sunshine and the balminess of the air that came in through the open window, making up for his memory of yesterday, which had been gray and cold and dour. He rolled out of bed, surprised for a moment to find himself on the top tier of a bunk bed, and plumped down to the floor hard enough to make the soles of his feet tingle; at the last few places they had lived, he hadn't a bunk bed, and he wasn't used to waking up that high off the ground. Sometimes he had trouble finding his clothes in the morning, but this time it seemed that he had been conscientious enough to hang them all up the night before, and he

Playing the Game

came across a blue shirt with a zigzag green stripe that he had not seen in a long time. That seemed like a good omen to him, and cheered him. He put on the blue shirt, then puzzled out the knots he could not remember leaving in his shoelaces. Still blinking sleep out of his eyes, he hunted futilely for his toothbrush; it always took a while for his mind to clear in the mornings, and he could be confused and disoriented until it did, but eventually memories began to seep back in, as they always did, and he sorted through them, trying to keep straight which house this was out of all the ones he had lived in, and where he kept things here.

Of course. But who would ever have thought that he'd keep it in an old coffee can under his desk!

Downstairs, his mother was making French toast, and he stopped in the archway to watch her as she cooked. She was a short, plump, dark-eyed, olive-complexioned woman who wore her oily black hair pulled back in a tight bun. He watched her intently as she fussed over the hot griddle, noticing her quick nervous motions, the irritable way she patted at loose strands of her hair. Her features were tightly drawn, her nose was long and straight and sharp, as though you could cut yourself on it, and she seemed all angles and edges today. Jimmy's father had been sitting sullenly over his third cup of coffee, but as Jimmy hesitated in the archway, he got to his feet and began to get ready for work. He was a thin man with a pale complexion and a shock of wiry red hair, and Jimmy bit his lip in disappointment as he watched him, keeping well back and hoping not to be noticed. He could tell from the insignia on his father's briefcase that his father was working in Endicott today, and those times when his father's job was in Endicott were among the times when both of his parents would be at their most snappish in the morning.

He slipped silently into his chair at the table as his father stalked wordlessly from the room, and his mother served him his French toast, also wordlessly, except for a slight, sullen grunt of acknowledgement. This was going to be a bad day—not as bad as those times when his father worked in Mannington and his mother took her “medicine,” not as bad as some other times that he had no intention of thinking about at all, but unpleasant enough, right on the edge of acceptability. He shouldn't have given in to tiredness and come inside yesterday, he should have kept playing the Game . . . Fortunately, he had no intention of spending much time here today.

Jimmy got through his breakfast with little real difficulty, except that his mother started in on her routine about why didn't he call Tommy Melkonian, why didn't he go swimming or bike riding,

he was daydreaming his summer away, it wasn't natural for him to be by himself all the time, he needed friends, it hurt her and made her feel guilty to see him moping around by himself all the time . . . and so on. He made the appropriate noises in response, but he had no intention of calling Tommy Melkonian today, or of letting her call for him. He had only played with Tommy once or twice before, the last time being when they lived over on Clinton Street (Tommy hadn't been around before that), but he didn't even *like* Tommy all that much, and he certainly wasn't going to waste the day on him. Sometimes Jimmy had given in to temptation and wasted whole days playing jacks or kick-the-can with other kids, or going swimming, or flipping baseball cards; sometimes he'd frittered away a week like that without once playing the Game. But in the end he always returned dutifully to playing the Game again, however tired of it all he sometimes became. And the Game had to be played alone.

Yes, he was definitely going to play the Game today; there was certainly no incentive to hang around here; and the Game seemed to be easier to play on fine, warm days anyway, for some reason.

So as soon as he could, Jimmy slipped away. For a moment he confused this place with the house they sometimes lived in on Ash Street, which was very similar in layout and where he had a different secret escape route to the outside, but at last he got his memories straightened out. He snuck into the cellar while his mother was busy elsewhere, and through the back cellar window, under which he had placed a chair so that he could reach the cement overhang and climb out onto the lawn. He cut across the neighbors' yards to Charles Street and then over to Floral Avenue, a steep macadam dead-end road. Beyond was the start of the woods that belonged to the cemetery. Sometimes the mud hills below the woods would be guarded by a mangy black and brown dog that would bark, snarl at him, and chase him. He walked faster, dreading the possibility.

But once in the woods, in the cool brown and green shade of bole and leaf, he knew he was safe, safe from everything, and his pace slowed. The first tombstone appeared, half buried in mulch and stained with green moss, and he patted it fondly, as if it were a dog. He was in the cemetery now, where it had all begun so long ago. Where he had first played the Game.

Moving easily, he climbed up toward the crown of woods, a grassy knoll that poked up above the surrounding trees, the highest point in the cemetery. Even after all he had been through, this was still a magic place for him; never had he feared spooks or ghouls while he was here, even at night,

**He flicked through
mental pictures
of the landscape
until he found one
that seemed to be right.
Obediently, the sky
grew darker . . .**

although often as he walked along, as now, he would peer up at the gum-gray sky, through branches that interlocked like the fingers of witches, and pretend that monsters and secret agents and dinosaurs were moving through the woods around him, that the stunted azalea bushes concealed pirates or orcs . . . But these were only small games, mood-setting exercises to prepare him for the playing of the Game itself, and they fell away from him like a shed skin as he came out onto the grassy knoll and the landscape opened up below.

Jimmy stood entranced, feeling the warm hand of the sun on the back of his head, hardly breathing, listening to the chirruping of birds, the scratching of katydids, the long, sighing rush of wind through oak and evergreen. The sky was blue and high and cloudless, and the Susquehanna River gleamed below like a mirror snake, burning silver as it wound through the rolling, hilly country.

Slowly, he began to play the Game. How had it been, that first time that he had played it, inadvertently, not realizing what he was doing, not understanding that he was playing the Game or what Game he was playing until after he had already started playing? How had it been? Had everything looked like this? He decided that the sun had been lower in the sky that day, that the air had been hazier, that there had been a mass of clouds on the eastern horizon, and he flicked through mental pictures of the landscape as if he were riffling through a deck of cards with his thumb, until he found one that seemed to be right. Obediently, the sky grew darker, but the shape and texture of the clouds were not right, and he searched until he found a better match. It had been somewhat colder, and there had been a slight breeze . . .

So far it had been easy, but there were more subtle adjustments to be made. Had there been four smokestacks or five down in Southside? Four, he decided, and took one away. Had that radio tower been on the crest of that particular distant hill? Or on *that* one? Had the bridge over the Susquehanna been nearer or further away? Had that Exxon sign been there, at the corner of Cedar Road? Or had it been an Esso sign? His blue shirt had changed to a brown shirt by now, and he changed it further, to a red pinstriped shirt, trying to remember. Had that ice cream stand been there? He decided that it had not been. His skin was dark again now, although his

hair was still too straight . . . Had the cemetery fence been a wrought iron fence or a hurricane fence? Had there been the sound of a factory whistle blowing? The smell of sulphur in the air? Or the smell of pine . . .?

He worked at it until dusk; and then, drained, he came back down the hill again.

The shopping mall was still there, but the school and schoolyard had vanished this time, to be replaced by the familiar row of stately, dormer-windowed old mansions. That usually meant that he was at least close. The house was on Schubert Street this evening, several blocks over from where it had been this morning, and it was a two-story, not a three-story house, closer to his memories of how things had been before he'd started playing the Game. The car outside the house was a '78 Volvo—not what he remembered, but closer than the '73 Buick from this morning. The windshield bore an Endicott parking sticker, and there was some Weston Computer literature tucked under the eyeshade, all of which meant that it was probably safe to go in; his father wouldn't be a murderous drunk this particular evening.

Inside the parlor, Jimmy's father looked up from his armchair, where he was reading Fuller's *Decisive Battles of the Western World*, and winked. "Hi, sport," he said, and Jimmy replied, "Hi, Dad." At least his father was a black man this time, as he should be, although he was much fatter than Jimmy ever remembered him being, and still had this morning's kinky red hair, instead of the kinky black hair he should have. Jimmy's mother came out of the kitchen, and she was thin enough now, but much too tall, with a tiny upturned nose, blue eyes instead of hazel, hair more blond than auburn . . .

"Wash up for dinner, Jimmy," his mother said, and Jimmy turned slowly for the stairs, feeling exhaustion wash through him like a bitter tide. She wasn't *really* his mother, they weren't *really* his parents. He had come a lot closer than this before, lots of other times . . . But always there was some small detail that was *wrong*, that proved that this particular probability-world out of the billions of probability-worlds was *not* the one he had started from, was not *home*.

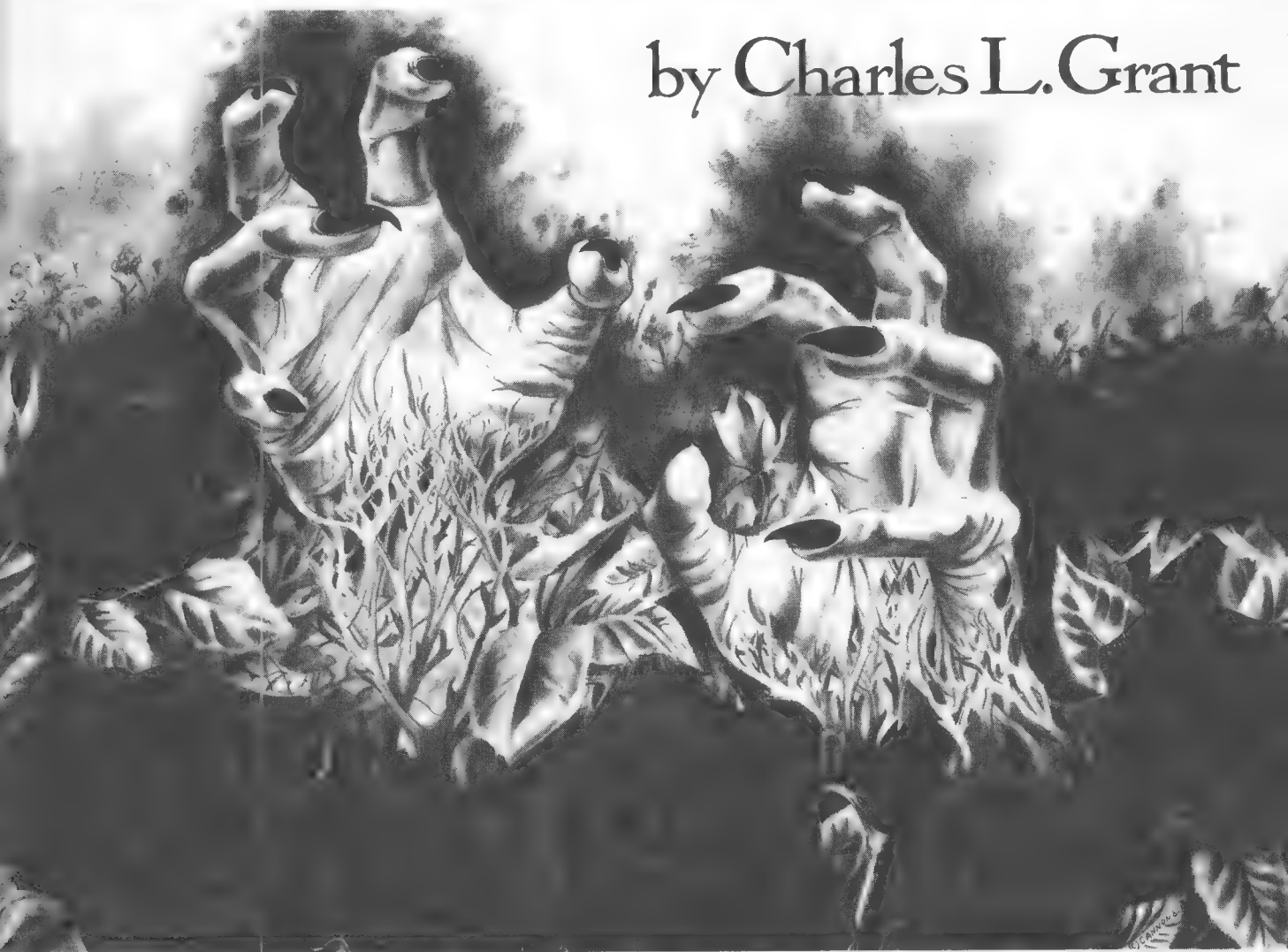
Still, he had done much worse than this before, too. At least this wasn't a world where his father was dead, or an atomic war had happened, or his mother had cancer or was a drug addict, or his father was a brutal drunk, or a Nazi, or a child molester . . . This would do, for the night . . . He would settle for this, for tonight . . . He was so tired . . .

In the morning, he would start searching again.

Someday, he would find them. 17

Essence of Charlotte

by Charles L. Grant



ONE BY ONE THE TOWNSPEOPLE DIED, AS SILENTLY AND MYSTERIOUSLY
AS PETALS DROPPING FROM A ROSE.

The death of Aunt Charlotte was both unexpected and frightening. Unexpected because Warren thought she would live forever; frightening because he'd never known himself capable of such violence. And unlike many of his favorite suspense stories, there was nothing major about her existence (save, perhaps, for the existence itself) that fed his hatred. It was the small things, rather, that made being in the same house with her akin to eternity in a padded cell. Her love for the Brooklyn Dodgers, for example, resisting all rational attempts to prove to her that the Dodgers had been on the West Coast for over two decades; the dentures she enjoyed tossing at him when he walked into her bedroom; the room itself that had to be dusted every morning with clean rags; the motorized wheelchair that was to be

oiled once a week at the local gas station ... little things, irritating things, as well as her not *quite* interfering with his private life, not *quite* telling him how to run his modestly successful business, and not *quite* letting him know he wasn't exactly the best companion she had ever had.

Little things; and he hated her for them.

He knew it was unoriginal, both situation and response, but nevertheless he chafed.

After a few sessions with a therapist whose office was next to his own hardware-appliance emporium, Warren concluded that the focus of his unrest lay in Charlotte's *presence* rather than her deeds. She was an immensely overpowering woman of extraordinary energy, given to loud recitations of reminiscence, the vital statistics of the 1947 Dodgers, and not *quite* impugning Warren's

Essence of Charlotte

masculinity, though he had more than enough women to slake his appetite. In her day she had been a radical feminist, had amassed a small fortune in gold and bonds she passed on to charities for wayward girls, and had subtly browbeaten three husbands into early, grateful, graves. Though mobility had been corraled, her energy had not, when, fifteen years ago, her MG Classic had been struck by an oil truck, thus confining her to bed and wheelchair.

Familial guilt and ten years of little contact brought Warren to her when she asked.

There were also the roses.

Charlotte's passion was six beds of roses in her backyard; they were not perfect nor were they unusual, but Warren had an affinity for flowers of all kinds, and most of his spare time was spent in the gardens, gloves properly on, cleaning the slightly raised beds of weeds and other dangerous intruders, snipping a blossom here and there for one of his lady-friends, or simply sitting there and watching them catch the late afternoon sun.

"You're worse a thorn in my side than they are," Charlotte told him at last; and when she demanded the entire yard be spaded over to make way for apple trees, her nephew knew the clichéd truth of straws and camels' backs.

Late on a Saturday when he should have been at the movies, he returned to the house, entered through the back door and made his way up the stairs and into her bedroom where she was watching a film about Druids and black magic in suburban Los Angeles. She glared at him, sniffed, then grinned slyly, yanked and threw her dentures at him in one swift motion. Warren stood his ground.

"Have you done the roses yet, Warren Grogan?"

He reached under the bed where he knew he would find her favorite souvenir: a Louisville Slugger autographed by Andy Pafko.

"You're crazy, you wimp," she said, having seen enough cop films to know what the bat meant.

He admitted as how he probably was, at the moment.

"You won't get away with it."

He doubted he would be caught.

"You realize, of course, Warren, I won't take this passively. I have my ways, as you well know."

He shrugged his unconcern.

"You'll pay for this, you refrigerator freak."

He sighed. There was nothing for it but to stave in her skull.

Time compressed.

Without permitting himself to think, Warren gathered for himself one of her Spanish shawls, a floppy-brimmed hat, and one of her shoes. In the

garage he slid into the driver's seat of her specially equipped automobile (one she seldom used save for attending feminist rallies) and, with a few minutes' study, learned how to operate the curious-looking levers. He drove through the night to a side road previously unearthed, skidded the car twice to provide appropriate tire-marks, then jumped from the vehicle just before it slammed through a rotted rail fence, dove thirty feet down into a rocky, deep stream that was swift-moving and treacherous even in summer. The car landed upside down, its doors sprung open, and after it Warren tossed the hat, the shoe, the Spanish shawl and, with a flourish worthy of a matador, her slightly cracked dentures.

It took him nearly a full day to walk home again without appearing on the main road.

Another few hours to clean up the bedroom and carry the body down into the kitchen. There he emptied a bottle of finely aged brandy and proceeded to be sure that a part of his aunt would lie safely beneath each of her precious rosebeds; six in all.

The following week was hectic: two severe thunderstorms that almost flattened the flowers, two sale days unprecedented in his entire business history, and several calls wondering if Charlotte would mind speaking at this-and-that meeting.

"When she gets back," he said, "but I don't know where she's gone."

His own call to the police, expressing concern.

Another call for worry.

And a third to demand action.

Ten days later, when he had cleaned out his store of every freezer in stock and considered it an omen, he was completely undisturbed when he arrived home at seven and discovered Detective Sergeant Stanford waiting on the porch.

Warren decided then he could well have been an actor instead of a salesman.

Solemn-faced and apologetic, Stanford told him of a pair of lovers who had found the wrecked car, and not finding the body despite a search by the state police. Warren was shocked, trembling as he identified the shawl and the shoe and the slightly cracked dentures; the hat, it appeared, had vanished with his aunt.

He was indignant when he was questioned about wills and finances, telling the detective that his aunt's fortune was long gone, and that the house had been in his name for the last seven years. There were no enemies, real or imagined, and though Charlotte was an invalid she could take care of herself.

"She had her life and I had mine," he insisted; and Stanford left properly, though Warren caught him frowning.

Another week, and he decided it was time to resume his inactive social life. In this too he was

He stared at the roses,
whose cousins he had given,
one blossom each,
to each one of his ladies.
"You can't be that strong,
Aunt Charlotte," he said.
The roses shivered
in the cool evening breeze.

successful, though there were minor problems at home: on Monday he found a pair of dead cats in the yard and had the ASPCA remove them, as well as the mongrel who seemed to have died on Tuesday; Stanford visited him on Wednesday and Friday, seemingly on business though Warren knew better than that.

But there were also compensations: his women were affectionate (more so than ever since he played up his mourning), and the roses bloomed incredibly, their colors more vivid than he'd ever seen them before, their petals pure velvet, their stems thick and hardy. It was ironical and he knew it, and each night he toasted Charlotte for the sustenance she gave.

But in the middle of the third week he began to wonder.

He was shaken, more than even he would admit to himself, when a stereotypical dumb blonde he had bedded on Sunday was found to have passed away in her sleep during the following night. Somehow, Stanford found the connection, and Warren had to keep himself tight lest he pound the man's face in: "For God's sake, man, I only dated her once! And since she wasn't murdered, would you mind leaving me alone?"

That night, in the kitchen, he stared out at the garden.

The next weekend he was with a woman from a neighboring farm community; her obituary said she had died in her sleep.

Stanford showed up on a Saturday with a court order allowing him to probe the garden. Warren was manful about not butting in, but he stayed close to the garage and his sports car while the police made a few experimental forays into three of the rosebeds. He couldn't believe it when they didn't find a thing. Neither could Stanford, but he apologized politely and led his men away.

Sunday, Warren drove. No place in particular, but he had to have time to convince himself he wasn't crazy, that guilt wasn't undermining the stuff of his resolve. And when he returned home he

went straight to the garden and stared at the roses—the beautiful roses whose cousins he had given, one blossom each, to each one of his ladies.

"You can't be *that* strong, Aunt Charlotte," he said.

The roses shivered in the cool evening breeze.

"It doesn't happen," he told his nondescript reflection in the bathroom mirror.

"Never in a million years," he muttered to the flowers on his way to work the next day.

"Science refuses to acknowledge this possibility," he said to the brandy.

Two cats, a dog, two women.

"But *I'm* out there every day," he said to the ceiling while he was trying to sleep, though he wouldn't put it past Charlotte to have thought of that one already.

He had to have a test.

He thought, then, of Stanford, who kept dogging his shadow. But not only was it obvious, it was too risky as well. Instead, he clipped a yellow blossom and laid it on the chest of a derelict in the park; the paper two days later merely said that the dead man was "unknown."

"Good God," Warren said, "I'm King Midas of the Styx."

Time compressed further.

During the day Warren continued to operate his hardware-appliance business as though nothing untoward were happening. He was bright (though his assistants complained he was a little too bright), he was cheerful (those same assistants began rumoring about liquor in the morning, for breakfast), and he even found himself breaking a decades-old rule and actually dickering over the prices, allowing his increasing share of the customer market to think it was getting a better deal than advertised.

During the evening, however, Warren locked himself in his home, drew all the shades and lighted all the lamps, spent most of his time sitting in the kitchen staring at his reflection in the back door pane. On some nights he convinced himself he had been driven guiltily insane; on others he planned ways to use the roses to take care of those who irritated him, who beleaguered him, who beset him with competition both in television sets and lovely young women.

Not once did he return to the garden.

Until one afternoon in the middle of July.

He had been out the evening before, had had too much wine, and the resulting day-after headache resisted all the aspirin he'd been able to get down. Leaving the store in the care of his new manager, he drove slowly home, parked in the driveway and was about to cut across the lawn to



the front door when he noticed that the gate in the cyclone fence between house and garage was ajar. He frowned, tugged nervously at his tie and walked toward it. Stopped when he saw a man lying next to one of the rose bushes. He didn't have to move any closer—the monk's cap, the thick neck, the contrastingly slender waist: it was Standford.

Good God, he thought and, with a glance at his neighbors' houses, he ran into the yard. And just as he did, Standford pushed himself onto his knees, wiped his hands against his trousers and stared at him. He was without a jacket, his shirt open at the neck and stained with dirt.

"I give up," he said.

Warren only just barely kept himself from saying, "Good."

"Listen," the detective said, still on his knees, "I haven't got a gun, my badge is home—and I think my sanity is, too—and all I want to do is figure out how you put the old lady in here without us finding her."

"You're insulting," Warren said, not bothering to hide a sly and smug grin. "I have no idea what you're talking about."

"I don't have a tape recorder, either. You know this is driving me nuts, don't you. You know I don't believe for a minute your aunt's body was washed away in that stream, not with all those rocks and bends to catch her even if she did die in that crash. Listen, Mr. Grogan, I swear to you—"

Warren didn't hear him, didn't hear the first time his last name was used. Instead he was staring at the roses, all the beautiful roses, wondering why the policeman wasn't dead. He almost laughed then, so relieved was he that roses didn't kill people, that no matter how far-fetched there were still such things as unpleasant coincidences.

He was so relieved, in fact, that he almost blurted a confession. He caught himself quickly, however, and blustered denials so hot and acidic that Standford quickly scrambled to his feet and virtually ran for the gate.

"And don't think I won't have your job for this harassment," Warren shouted after him.

Then, when he was sure he would be undisturbed, he wandered through the garden, touching the flowers, feeling their velvet, impressed as always by the sweep of their petals. Good Lord, he thought, it's like being let out of jail; and the irony of it filled his lungs with air, his eyes with

delight, and he did laugh this time, so hard that his sides ached and his cheeks ached and his legs wouldn't hold him. He stumbled once and automatically reached out a hand to steady himself, grabbed a thick-stemmed bush and yanked back his hand with a chuckling curse. Carefully, then, he pulled out the thorn embedded in his thumb and decided that tonight he would give a call to the mayor's wife; God knows she'd given him plenty of signs when she saw him on the street, came into the store.

The mayor's wife. Tall, busty, with long auburn hair that flared like fire when the sun was just right.

He grinned and shook his head at his daring, hurried into the kitchen and began preparations for a meal that would give him all the energy he thought he'd need.

And he whistled as he undressed and showered, shaved and dried, came down in his smoking jacket to check on the roast.

And stopped on the threshold as though he'd been clubbed.

There, lying on the counter beside the flour tin, were his gardening gloves. Beside them the shears he used to trim all the roses. He looked down at his hand, back to the gloves, was moaning aloud when he crumpled to the floor.

Damn, he thought, she got me again.

It wasn't the scent after all, he knew. Charlotte in her whole life was never that subtle, never that clever. Which was why the police when they dug at the garden didn't keel over like flies, why Standford wasn't dead after poking around, why he himself had never succumbed to the roses.

The thorns.

Her revenge was in the thorns.

Of course, he thought as the room grew darker, the police would say he was overcome with guilt and had somehow killed himself as he had killed the others. They would concoct a story the press would believe, and that would be the end of it as far as they were concerned. They would never know that each time he worked in the garden, for a minute or an hour, he always wore his gloves out of lifetime habit; they would never know that the tiny prick in his thumb had been his undoing when he had been careless.

They would never know at all.

But he would ... but he did.

What had his aunt said? He was a thorn in her side? He should have listened to her more often; he should have, but he didn't.

And as his smile grew more painful, and the darkness absolute, he realized that Charlotte was definitely not finished.

There were still all those roses, and every one of them had thorns. 17



RETURN WITH US NOW TO THE GREAT AMERICAN CENSUS OF 1980
IN A MODERN-DAY FAIRY TALE ABOUT A LITERAL-MINDED CENSUS TAKER
AND A HOUSEHOLD THAT'S DEFINITELY . . .

"OTHER"

by Jor Jennings

Funny, I don't remember seeing this house before, Rita thought as she parked her car next door in Crestview Arms's fifteen-minute loading zone. In all the years she had walked Ronnie down this street, around the cul-de-sac, and back on the other side, you would think she would have noticed the bungalow behind the vine-covered wall. Perhaps it was more visible now that it was the only house left on the block, the one single-family relic struggling to survive on a street full of big, new, ugly condominiums squatting on their underground parking and staring down through aluminum-framed glass at the seedling pine trees bristling beside their walkways. But, of course, she had always kept her attention fixed on Ronnie, to avoid seeing the curious, pitying, sometimes hostile stares of her unknown neighbors. Besides, if Ronnie fell, his four-hundred-pound bulk

was more than she could get on its feet again, and it was embarrassing to have to ask strangers for help.

Rita checked her list again. Yes, there really was a 1928 Crestview Circle, and its residents had not returned their census form. Llano, it said on the mailbox. What kind of name was that? She looked at her watch. Four-thirty. Just time enough to do the interview, pick up Ronnie at the day care center, give Elizabeth her bath, iron Carolyn's clothes, and fix dinner before Burt came home with his clients. With Burt Jr. coming home for the weekend . . . "I can manage," Rita said aloud, as though trying to convince Burt that she could handle a job and still give her family the same loving care she had always provided.

She pushed open the vine-tangled gate and started down the overgrown walk. Blooming fruit



trees half strangled by flowering vines, jasmine, honeysuckle, rambling roses, reared up around her, marooning her in an overpoweringly odorous jungle of glowing flowers, bees, and hummingbirds.

The boy who answered the door came up to Rita's shoulder, yet there was a strange air of maturity about him. His coloring was strange, too: skin dark as an Indian's, pale green eyes, a shock of shoulder-length yellow-white hair. A surfer? Yes, that would account for the suntan and bleached hair. The boy didn't look so odd, now that she had identified him as a surfer.

"Hello, I'm from the Census Office, my name is Rita Morgenthau, here's my identification," Rita said, as she had been saying all day. "This is 1928 Crestview Circle?" The boy seemed too bewildered to reply, and she asked, "How old are you?"

"I don't know," the boy said. "You mean in years?" He started counting on his fingers.

Phenylketonuria! Rita thought. Poor boy. He would not have become retarded if only the disorder had been diagnosed in time. Maybe his parents would like to join Families with Special Children, a group Rita had started when Ronnie was born. "Uh, never mind," Rita said gently. "Is your mother or father at home?"

"Violet. That's my mother," the boy said positively. "I don't know my father, though." He sounded unconcerned.

"Uh—well, is Violet here, then?" Rita asked,

hoping she hadn't blushed.

"No."

"When do you expect her back?"

"Tomorrow. Next year. Maybe midsummer?"

He wasn't concerned about that, either.

"Well, who's taking care of you in her absence?"

"Huh?" said the boy with a blank stare.

Hoping that someone was taking care of the boy, that this Violet person hadn't simply abandoned her illegitimate, mentally defective son, Rita tried again. "Look, is there a head of the household, uh, an older person living with you—"

"The Queen," the boy said. "You wish to speak with the Queen?"

"That's right. Let me speak to the Queen."

Who or what the Queen was, she could find out from the Queen.

"Follow me, please." Taking a torch off the wall, the boy led the way down a long, dark hall.

It was a very long, very dark hall. How long a hall can you put in a tiny bungalow? This one seemed to go on for miles. Rita had plenty of time to wonder about that, and about the boy's torch, a baton tipped with a smokeless ball of blue fire, and time left over to worry about getting into something her training hadn't covered. Could she find her way back to the front door, while running, in a panic? Finally the boy led her down some stone steps into a room like a white limestone grotto

"OTHER"

filled with houseplants, shrubs, and small trees, where his family was having a reunion.

Some of the people were a little taller than the boy, some a little shorter, all were dark-skinned and ivory or pinkish haired, and there were a lot of them. They kept moving in and out of the shrubbery, so they were hard to count. The first time Rita tried to count them she got to fifty-two before she realized that she had counted some twice. She started over and this time counted thirty-nine.

The focus of the family was a skinny old woman in a cloudlike shawl who sat by a firepit in an ornate rattan rocking chair, absent-mindedly stroking the pet badger asleep on her lap. Two elderly men sat nearby on stools; a third, and some women, sat at her feet on tortoises. One woman stirred the contents of a translucent alabaster cauldron suspended over the smokeless blue coals in the firepit. Meanwhile, the young folks moved about the garden, stopping to mist the begonias, bromeliads and orchids that grew on the ceiling among the stalagmites, eat apricots and pomegranates off the trees, or kneel over flowers with straws in their mouths (were they hand-pollinating the blooms?). Some worked, together or alone, at projects. Two girls were making a complicated floor-to-ceiling macrame sculpture, while a third spun yarn for them, now and again laying down her spindle and going off to comb more wool from a vicuna browsing on the flowers. Two boys practiced their music lessons, one on the harp, the other on the recorder. They managed to sound pretty together, although they were playing different pieces.

How long has it been since I sat down at my cello? Rita wondered. Not since Burt brought Ronnie home from the hospital. Burt said they couldn't afford the sanitarium anymore, not with Burt Jr. in medical school, and the state hospital kept poor Ronnie so drugged ... So had the sanitarium, for that matter. That was about all you could do with Ronnie, drug him to prevent the destructive rages that erupted whenever he was denied the food he had to have constantly. Rita couldn't bear to drug him, so she let him eat. "Rita, you're killing him with kindness," the doctor had warned when Rita proved incapable of keeping her idiot first-born son on any kind of diet. *Exactly*, she realized. She was murdering Ronnie. Except, to prove murder, you would first have to prove that Ronnie was a human being. That might be hard to do. A shark has more cerebral cortex ... That's what Ronnie was, a shark! A four-hundred-pound shark in a perpetual feeding frenzy ... *Have another chocolate cake, Ronnie!* Vividly she visualized Ronnie stuffing chocolate cake into his mouth with both hands, getting chocolate icing in his beard, up his nose ... Just as vividly she imagined a Ronnie grown so

gross he could no longer get through the door, stumbling, falling on his face, and, unable to stand or even roll over, suffocating in his fat like a beached whale. Seeing him dead like that, she saw how he had terrified her...

What appalling thoughts she was having! This would never do. She glanced at the new digital watch Burt had given her after Ronnie broke the old one (along with his mother's arm). The numbers flickered faintly, as though the battery were weak, but it was a different number each time. She pushed the button to get the date. "8 18, 12 4, 3 28" —oh well. If she was late getting home she could always say her watch wasn't working.

"Hello, I'm from the Census Office, my name is Rita Morgenthau, I'm here to ask you some questions because the office has no record of receiving your form," Rita said with the feeling that she was talking too fast.

Everyone else she called on had protested that they had mailed in their census form ages ago, they couldn't understand why the Census Office hadn't received it, perhaps it had been lost in the mail? No one said that here. Instead, there was a moment of silence while the group around the old woman digested the information, and then the man sitting at her feet said, "Be welcome."

A slip of a girl in a seafoam silk frock retrieved a green python from an emerald cushion in a rattan armchair near the fire, wound it expertly around her tiny waist, nudged Rita into the chair, and filled a mug for her at the cauldron. Rita hadn't meant to accept refreshments, but the conservatory seemed chilly, and the spicy brew was so fragrant and warm, she couldn't resist sipping it. "This is delicious! I must get the recipe," she hinted.

No one offered to give it to her, and Rita, feeling embarrassed, decided it was time to get down to business. "Um—this is the residence at 1928 Crestview Circle?" No one said it wasn't, and Rita added, "Just checking. How many people actually live here, Mr. — is it Lano, or Yano?" she asked the man who had welcomed her.

"You may call me whichever you prefer," he replied agreeably. "Do not be surprised, however, if everyone else calls me Oregon Junco."

"It says 'Llano' on your mailbox," Rita said somewhat defensively.

"Does it? I wouldn't know about that."

"Okay, Mr. Junco." A titter ran round the room at that, and Rita guessed she had said something wrong. Well, she couldn't worry about every faux pas. "How many of you people actually live in this house, Mr. Junco?"

He shrugged. "All of us live here, when we are here. When we are somewhere else, we live



there. What can I tell you? We come and we go."

"I see. Well, what I really need to know is how many people were living in this house on April 1, 1980."

Nobody said anything. Rita tried again. "Mr. Junco, were you living in this house on April 1, 1980?"

"No, I was in Spain. Wait a minute—1980, you say? Was that the year of the great earthquake?"

"April 1, 1980 was last month," said Rita.

"Oh. In that case, I was living here. Most likely."

Everyone else quickly agreed that they too were living here on April 1, 1980. Most likely.

Rita realized she would have to write down what they told her, whether or not she believed it. "Okay, now I need to get your names—"

"My name is House Finch," said the boy who had been her guide, and he whistled the song of the house finch to prove it.

"I'm Thistledown," said one of the macramé girls, drifting across Rita's field of vision in a flurry of pale skirts; the yarn spinner, "Mourning Dove," nested and cooed, while "Wild Cucumber" proved her identity by climbing the macramé.

"Just a minute, I need your ages, too," Rita said before anyone else could sing or dance.

"Forty-three," House Finch said promptly.

"I mean in years," Rita said, remembering his earlier confusion.

"That's in years. Your years," House Finch amended. "A span of elapsed our-time equivalent to one revolution of the Earth around the Sun."

Mourning Dove was also forty-three, Thistledown a year younger, and Wild Cucumber a mere kid of thirty-eight.

"They can't be," Rita appealed to Oregon Junco.

"I'm one hundred and eighty-three," Oregon Junco said helpfully.

"Oregon Junco, 143," Rita said as she wrote. No one corrected her. "Now, I also need your relationship to the head of the household—"

The old woman looked up from her badger. "They're all my children."

"Then you must be Violet," Rita guessed.

"Of course I'm not Violet. I'm Slime Mold.

Violet isn't here," the old woman snapped. She seemed offended.

"But I thought—" Rita began, looking at House Finch.

"They're all my children," Slime Mold repeated. "If you don't put they're all my children, this will take too much time."

"I can manage," Rita said sharply, as though the old woman had criticized her. The way Burt had criticized her, over and over. "If you don't have time—to take my suits to the cleaners, to entertain my clients, to plant the hundred gladiolas I just bought—you should never have taken this job." *I took this job before you asked your invalid mother to live with us*, Rita wanted to scream at him, but he wasn't there. Instead, she said to Slime Mold what she had always said to Burt. *I can manage*.

Poor Elizabeth, Rita thought, trying hard to feel sympathetic. How terrible it must be to be bedridden, senile, incontinent, half-paralyzed from strokes, and utterly dependent on the daughter-in-law you've always despised! *Come on, Elizabeth! One more stroke! And this time, give it all you've got!*

ELIZABETH MORGENTHAU

1909-1982

Beloved Wife and Mother

it said on the headstone, half-hidden in deep grass. The plastic flowers in the vase at its foot were faded to gray. The picture in Rita's mind was so vivid, she actually seemed to be on that graveyard hillside. She concentrated, trying to add a fourth line, "Nagging Mother-in-Law," to the grave marker, but her mind refused to do that. Finally she gave up and wandered on . . .

To Carolyn's grave. *Oh, no! Not Carolyn! I don't want Carolyn to die! I just want her to see a psychiatrist*, Rita told her unconscious mind. *And fulfill the promise of her beauty, not get stuck in the wife-and-mother trap like I did*. Instead, Carolyn, a lovely blonde who dressed all in white and scorned synthetics, came home from college determined to be a writer, and spent all day locked in her room, playing rock and roll at full volume on her stereo, emerging only to procure a fresh bottle from her father's wine cellar. "Rita, we have to be patient with her, she's writing the great American novel," said Burt, who didn't have to iron his darling daughter's lily white, one-hundred-percent natural fiber clothes (she went through three sets a day), nor did he have to stay home all the time caring for a paralyzed harpy and a dangerous monster, while the thud thud thud from Carolyn's stereo reverberated through the house until Rita thought she would go out of her mind. *Carolyn plays the stereo so loud to cover up the sound her typewriter isn't making, while she drinks herself insensible*,

"OTHER"

Rita wished she could tell Burt. *Is that how ...?* And Rita saw her beautiful, blond daughter, dressed as always in immaculate white ducks and white silk shirt, speakerphones over her ears and her head in a fogbank, roller-skating out the driveway right into the path of an oncoming street sweeper. Swish! Scrub! Rub-a-de-dub! And the too-clean novelist was all washed up.

Rita blinked, and the flowery cavern was around her again. The old woman, Slime Mold—was that really her name?—was looking at her strangely. "I'm sorry, I've got a million things on my mind," Rita said, and, as her habit was, followed her apology with a compliment. "You know, this patio—this conservatory—it's really the most beautiful place I've ever seen. You must have one fantastic green thumb."

"If you like it here, stay as long as you wish," said Slime Mold. "Once you leave, you will not be able to return."

"Oh, I'd love to stay, but I have a jillion things to do," Rita said with a nervous laugh. "Including filling out the rest of this form. Now, look. Fun's fun, but the Census Office really does need to know—"

"No, it doesn't," snapped Slime Mold.

"Not anymore," said Oregon Junco, by way of explanation.

"But it does!" Rita protested. "They need to know what the population is, so they can apportion representatives—"

"Then ask us your questions and we will tell you what to put," said Slime Mold, "but if you argue about every answer you will be here much too long."

"That's for sure. My car will be towed away." Rita looked at her watch. The window was blank. "Look, I'm willing to put down anything you say, if you'll sign the statement at the end that says all of the above information is true to the best of your knowledge."

"You put. I sign," said Slime Mold.

"Head of household. Slime Mold," Rita put.

"Two hundred and four years old," said Slime Mold.

"Gee, I suppose everyone tells you this, but you don't look a day over ninety," said Rita, deciding to go along with the gag.

No one laughed. "You age faster than we do," Oregon Junco explained, not unkindly.

"Thanks. I needed that. Now, let's get the rest of the names—"

Everyone in the room had an Indian-sounding name, and everyone claimed to be much older than they looked. Most remembered being born, but didn't know the date. Rita interrupted tales of "popping out" on lily pads, in Antarctic crevasses,

among the vents of submarine volcanoes, with "What race are you?"

"The race that's not to the swift," Oregon Junco said wittily.

"That's not on my list. I'll read it to you. Are you, check one, white, black or negro, Japanese, Chinese, Philippino, Korean, Vietnamese, American Indian (in which case, which tribe?), Asian Indian, Hawaiian, Guamanian, Samoan, Eskimo, Aleut, or Other?"

"Other," said Slime Mold, as though it were obvious.

"Other. Right. Now, we do have to specify. What race are you, if you're not on my list? Gypsies? You're not gypsies, are you?"

House Finch perched on the arm of her chair and looked down at the form she was filling out. "We're fairies," he said.

"You can't all be!" Rita felt her face turning red. "Anyway, that's not a race," she mumbled.

House Finch agreed. "It's a different species."

"Not by their definition. Not if we interbreed and have fertile young. And Violet did get House Finch by a mortal father," Oregon Junco reminded them all.

There were murmurs of agreement from all around the room.

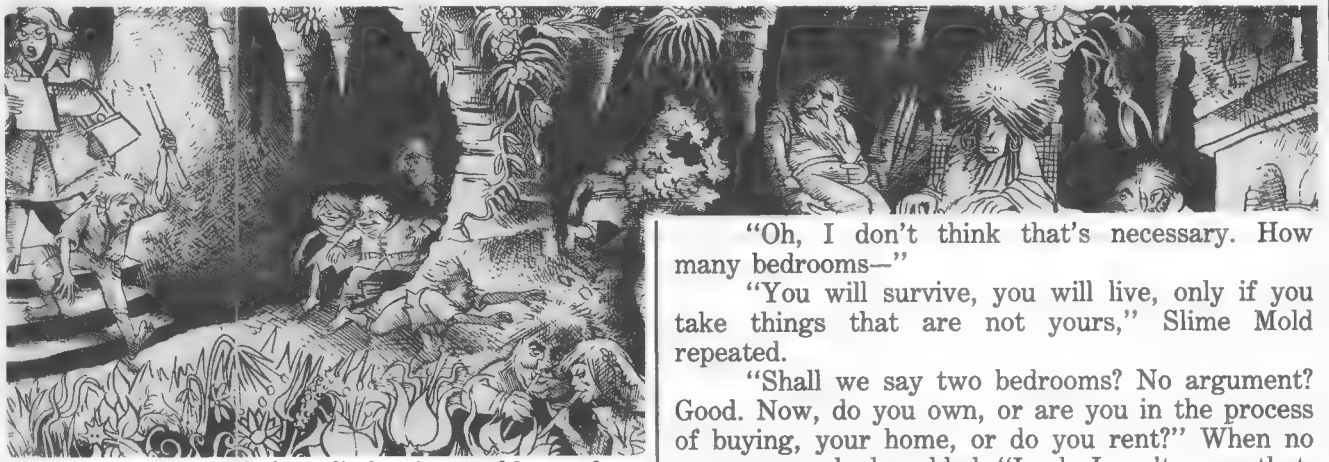
"So she said!" snapped Slime Mold.

Silence supplanted the murmurs.

Rita was silent, too. She was thinking about her own son, Burt Jr., the chip off Burt's block. Handsome, athletic, straight A student, halfway through medical school, and planning to specialize in orthopedic surgery—because that was where the money was. His brother's decorticate brain, his grandmother's shattered one, his mother's hot flashes, for that matter, none of it interested him. Just money. "Mom, do you know how much an orthopedic surgeon gets for testifying in a P.I. case?"

Let's see. To do in a doctor you need a medical problem, one outside his specialty, Rita decided, as she felt another hallucination coming on. She was beginning to enjoy them: what would her family say if they knew she was spending her afternoon visualizing horrible ways for them to die? *I guess I really did need to face up to my hostilities,* she thought, feeling delightfully naughty. *But what did they put in that drink?*

It was Supergerm, the ultimate, antibiotic-resistant microbe, swatting down Americans like DDT does flies, Rita decided. Fleeing the epidemic-ridden city too late, Burt and Burt Jr. cracked up the car, crawled feverishly through a sleetstorm to the leaky shelter of a tumbledown barn, and huddled shivering in mouldy straw, calling her name in their delirium, calling "Rita!" call-



ing "Mother!" until they died. Rita could see them very clearly in her mind's eye. Her student son looked middle-aged; Burt was an old man. Dear Burt. Burt, who brought his invalid mother home for her to care for just when she began training to be a census enumerator; Burt, who brought Ronnie home to stay right after she landed that long-sought place on the grand jury; Burt, who had called that afternoon to say he was bringing some important clients home with him: "I've told them what a great cook you are, Rita. They're expecting a gourmet dinner." Fat chance. She would pick up some fried chicken on the way home. No, the beef stroganoff was already thawing in the microwave. *Ronnie goes or I go!* No, Burt would just hint that she couldn't manage, and she could, that was the trouble. She could manage all too well. As long as she was willing to spend every waking moment doing things she didn't want to do, she could manage.

For starters, she would stop ironing Carolyn's clothes. They could stay in the dampening bag until they mildewed. And if Carolyn couldn't keep sober long enough to iron her own clothes, she could wear polyester doubleknits like everyone else. *One thing's sure. When I get home there'll be some changes made!*

"You don't want me to put 'gay' or something, you want me to put 'fairies'?" Rita asked Slime Mold. "If I put that, you'll sign?"

"You put, I sign," said Slime Mold.

"How do you spell it?" Rita was wondering if there was a race called Phaeris that she had never heard of.

"Spell it yourself. I don't know those birdtracks you call writing."

Then how are you going to sign this? Rita decided not to ask. She wrote, "Phaeris (sp)?" "Now. I assume you're all U.S. citizens. Tell me if you're not. Are any of you married? Hispanic or of Spanish descent? Good. That makes it easy. My next group of questions deals with your living quarters. Suppose I just tell you what I've assumed, and you tell me if I'm wrong. This address is 1928 Crestview Circle. There's one housing unit here, you enter from outside, not through a hall, I mean, that hall is part of your home, you do have hot water? that is, if you don't all take showers at once, ha, ha! Uh, how many bedrooms do you have?"

"If you would survive, you must take things that are not yours," said Slime Mold.

"Oh, I don't think that's necessary. How many bedrooms—"

"You will survive, you will live, only if you take things that are not yours," Slime Mold repeated.

"Shall we say two bedrooms? No argument? Good. Now, do you own, or are you in the process of buying, your home, or do you rent?" When no one answered, she added, "Look, I can't guess that, I really do need an answer."

"We live here," Oregon Junco said with a shrug.

"Sometimes," said Thistledown with a giggle.

"We come and we go," said Wild Cucumber in a sing-song, and the other girls chimed in, turning "We live here, Sometimes, We come and we go" into a round with an elaborate interweaving of harmony and counterpoint, which was picked up and amplified by the harpist and the recorder player.

They must be squatters. *Did the owner know that a horde of impecunious, mentally defective, homosexual pygmies had moved into his vacant house?* Rita wondered. She wrote, "Family lives here rent free. Not aware of value of house or land."

When Slime Mold signed the census form, and the supplementary pages, with what looked like an Egyptian hieroglyphic, Rita was beyond caring. She just wanted to get out of there. With the relief of someone leaving a lunatic asylum, she went out of the torch-lit hall into the bright spring sunshine, and down the flower-lined walk, to the curb.

Where her car was gone.

It's been towed away! I must have been gone a lot longer than fifteen minutes, was Rita's first thought. The tow trucks had certainly been busy! The only cars left at the curb were two dome-shaped three-wheeled vehicles covered with pine needles.

Oh that's the problem! This isn't Crestview Circle! But where in the neighborhood was this cul-de-sac shaded by huge, old, half-dead pine trees? Through the trees she could see dilapidated old apartment buildings that looked abandoned. Windows were broken, balconies dripped bird droppings, sidewalks were brown pine needles that hadn't been swept in years. Trying to get her bearings, Rita turned around to look at the tiny bungalow she had just visited. It was gone. Even the space it had occupied was gone, reduced to a narrow walkway between two huge, old, abandoned apartment buildings. Over the arched doorway of the nearest one, red tile letters still spelled out, "Crestview Arms."

In a growing panic, Rita clutched her shoulder bag to her chest and ran for the street that had led to her home. 17

MY OLD MAN

BY GEORGE ALEC EFFINGER

SEEN THROUGH THE EYES OF MEMORY,
LOVE AND HATE HAVE A WAY OF BEING CURIOUSLY INTERCHANGEABLE.

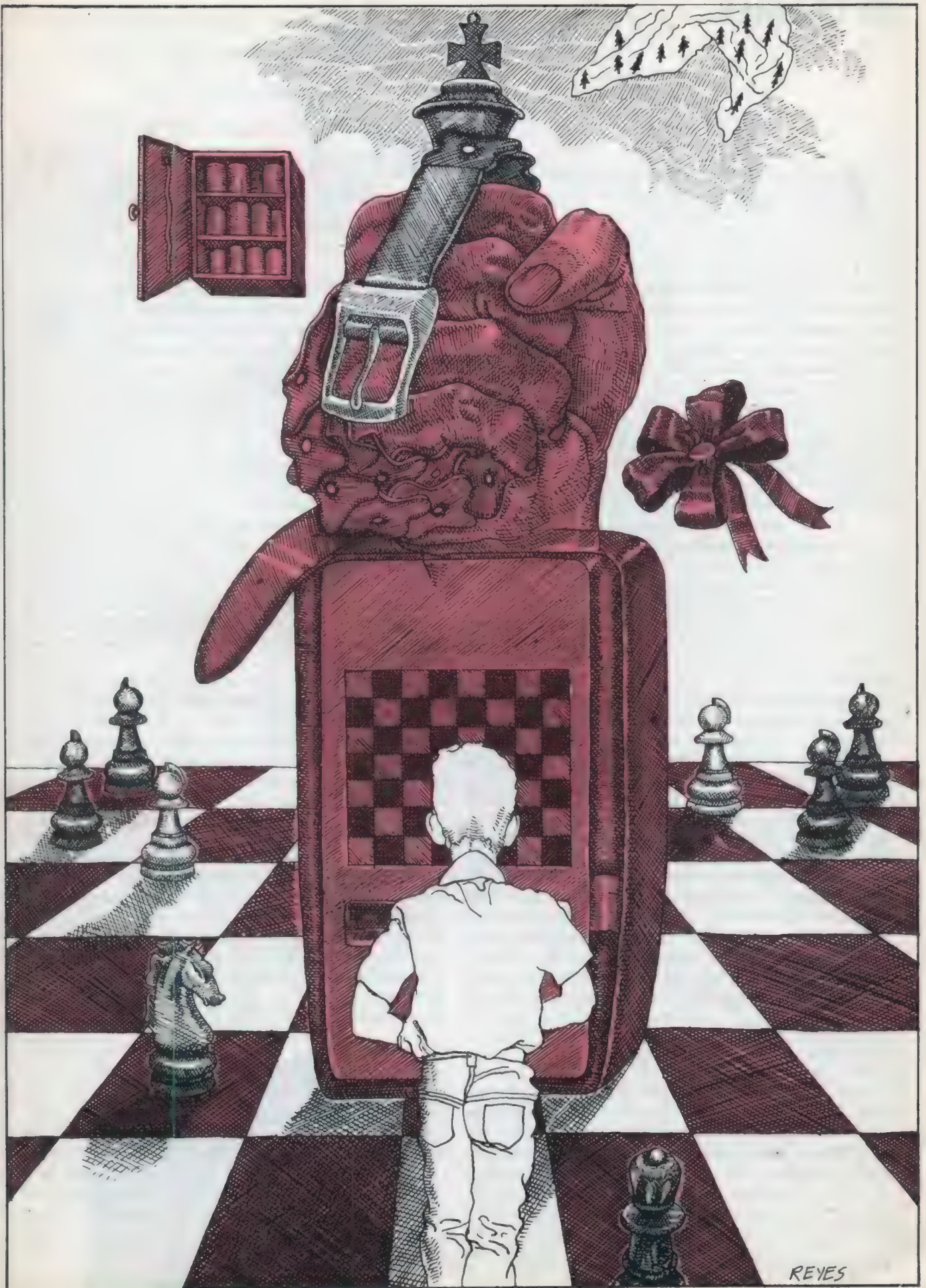
I have this little chess computer on my desk. It's about the size of a Bible and the same color, too. I put it on when I'm working. I give it seven and a half minutes to decide each move; if I set it for less, then I beat it all the time. If I give it more, then I don't stand a chance. It keeps me company, and it breaks up the monotony of my work. I take white and usually lead off with a simple P-K4. Then I turn to my typewriter and do a page or two, and by that time the little machine has made its choice. There's a little window where letters light up and tell me which of its pieces to play. Then I make my move, and do another bit of work.

The only dumb thing about the computer is that sometimes it gives me these programmed messages. You know: GOOD MOVE or YOU'RE IN (blink) TROUBLE (blink) NOW. The conversation always makes me impatient, even though it only lasts a second or two. The reason I bought the machine in the first place was so that I could play

chess without all the messing around you get playing another person. But most of the time I'm glad I bought it. It doesn't take up a lot of space, and it earns its keep better than a wave in a bottle or some of the things other people I know keep on their desks.

I've learned a lot about chess from the computer. We've spent many a pleasant hour together. We've become pretty close friends, I'd say, all things considered. I even overlook the thing's chattiness. I named it Lucky, because that was the name of a Dalmatian puppy I had for a few weeks when I was a kid.

You are going to be shown a series of pictures. You will be asked to write a little story about each picture. There will be a few questions with each picture. These questions are to help you to tell your story. Now look at the first picture. What is happening?



MY OLD MAN

For a little while that puppy kept me company better than any people I ever knew. I never had any friends, even when I was a kid. Not one single friend. When I was in grade school, my mother put me in the Cub Scouts, figuring that some other mother could take care of me one afternoon a week and leave her free to tend to all the important business she couldn't manage with me around the house. I don't think my mother had any notion of my learning new skills or meeting new friends or anything like that. She just thought it would be a great way of not having to entertain me for a few hours. She pulled me right back out when she learned that she was expected to be a den mother herself now and then and take on not just me but also the whole crowd of us scouts. That hadn't been part of her original plan. It interfered with the swift completion of her important business.

A few years later I found out that the important business was mostly this man who lived three houses down on Federal Street, Mr. Kaczar, who had a son named Terry who used to push my head down in the snowdrifts until they, the Kaczars, moved out of the neighborhood. But that isn't really part of this story and I only mentioned it because I'm trying to focus in here on the real emotional heart of what I want to say. I want to grab it out and put it down here on the page for you to read, so you can see and hear everything just the way it happened.

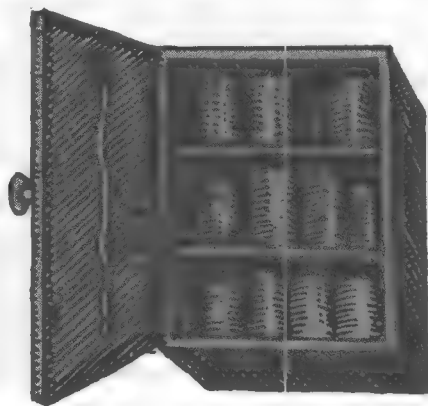
One day a few weeks ago, I was working on some ad copy for this perfume one of the den mothers used to wear all the time. When you smell it, you always think there's a convention of kindergarten teachers in town or something. Whenever I'm near anyone who's wearing it, I always get a nervous feeling in my stomach, I don't know why. So I was having a little trouble coming up with something clever yet marginally honest to say about it. I switched on Lucky and played my P-K4. Lucky thought about that for his allotted time and came back with a not-surprising reply: P-K4. I was in the middle of crumpling up a page of embarrassingly bad copy, and I saw that it was my turn again. I guess I ought to tell you that I cheat sometimes. You'll find out later anyway. I don't always play my own games; I like to find famous gems recorded in chess books, and see how Lucky does against the all-time greats. He does pretty well, too, if I give him enough time. So on this afternoon, I was trying an interesting little game, Distle-Rossipal, 1900. I was Distle, of course. I'm not that big a chess expert that I ever heard of the guy. Anyway, I used his second move, which would have been my own, I ought to say: N-KB3.

Lucky blinked a message: RIGHT BACK AT YA ... N-QB3. I stared at the little machine for a

moment. I'd never seen that message before. It wasn't even his usual tone, that's for sure. It made me feel very strange, like you do in dreams sometimes, and it reminded me of this very crucial moment in my life that I hadn't thought about at all in years.

When I was a Cub Scout, mostly we met at one kid's house or another and had the meetings and went through the little rituals and ate cookies and drank Kool-Aid and then—the exciting part—we did whatever terrific thing that week's den mother had dreamed up for us to do. A lot of the time this wasn't nothing much, really, like going out in the back yard and collecting different kinds of leaves. Very dull, especially when you're only eight or nine years old or whatever. We played games like kickball or Monopoly, or the den mother would read to us about Indians while we sat there moodily and waited to go home. One time, though, the den mother gave us these craft kits, and we spent a couple of happy hours putting together leather wallets and things. This was, looking back now, one of those magic moments that seem like not much at all at the time but which you remember forever and ever as one of those gigantic, brilliant turning points of your life.

Before I go any further and deal with how this moment changed my life and affected my relationship with my old man, whom I haven't described or even introduced so far, I have something to say about magic turning-point moments in general. They are not, in the real world, always what they're supposed to be. I learned this the hard way, the way most of us do but a lot of us forget it, I think, or file it away somewhere in our memories where we won't have to pay much attention to it for the rest of our lives. Then, when we see a movie or read a story about some poor joker who has one of these golden experiences, we cheer for him as if he just pulled off something wonderful. In the books and movies, though, the people always have the solutions to their troubles handed to them by some guy at a typewriter. Not me, man. It never happened to me. That's what I'm telling you about.



I didn't mind losing to the little computer, but I kind of resented his attitude. Machines aren't supposed to have attitudes.

Who are the people?

So right at the beginning of the game, my little chess computer, Lucky, tried to use psychology. I didn't know machines could do that, but, come to think of it, these games are getting more sophisticated all the time. RIGHT BACK AT YA. What I thought at first was that it was another of its programmed messages which, for some reason, had just never been used before. A statistical quirk, I called it. I played (or, rather, Mr. Distle played) P-Q4 and Lucky answered with PxP. I knew enough to see that's a normal Scotch game so far. What wasn't normal about it was the glee with which Lucky slaughtered that queen pawn. DIE, HEATHEN DOG flashed in his little window. For a moment, I wondered about the sobriety at the Michikeito Corporation. I punched in NxP and Lucky replied NxN EAT LEAD, FASCIST.

I objected to that. As far as I could see, my knight was only doing his job. "There's no room for that kind of thing in this game," I said. "Chess is a contest of the intellect."

TEMPERAMENT, blinked Lucky. ALL GREAT CHESS MASTERS SHOW TEMPERAMENT.

I can tell you, I was dismayed that the little plastic machine answered me like that. I tried to tell myself that I had imagined it all, that it was all a dream. But here is how the next part of the game went, with Lucky's unasked-for evaluations:

Me/Distle Lucky

5. QxN N-K2 YOU JUST WAIT
6. B-QB4 P-QB3 YOU CAN'T WIN, YOU KNOW
7. N-B3 P-Q3 LAY DOWN YOUR ARMS
8. B-KN5 Q-N3 SURRENDER AND I WILL BE MERCIFUL
9. QxQP QxNP YOU ARE POWERLESS TO RESIST
10. R-Q1 QxN CHECK, YOU FEEBLE-MINDED LOSER!

At this point I had to grant that Lucky had reason to gloat. I had spent the early part of the game developing my pieces, just the way the books say you're supposed to. Lucky, meanwhile, had made what I thought were wasted moves: the knight to K-2, for instance, which was pinned there. But then his queen slipped away and started ravaging my position. I didn't mind losing to the little computer, but I kind of resented his attitude. Machines aren't supposed to *have* attitudes.

Fortunately, I had this fellow Distle looking

over my shoulder. He told me to move B-Q2. I did, and that made Lucky even happier. He took the other bishop, QxB(B4), and added SUCKER! Well, I won't take that from anybody, not even an inanimate thing I bought in a discount house down on Division Street. Distle had a good move ready for me. Lucky's greed had ruined him: I played Q-Q8 (check). Lucky didn't like that at all. He blinked and blinked, and his seven and a half minutes went by, and he still blinked. I don't know why; he only had one move—KxQ. THE SLUT DIES, he said, but it was false bravado. Distle's combination was interesting; I've always loved queen sacrifices. I next played B-R5, giving a double check from the bishop and the uncovered rook. He had no choice but to move his king, K-K1. BIG DEAL, he blinked sourly. I moved R-Q8 (mate). Lucky waited a few seconds, then blinked DO YOU REMEMBER WHEN YOU MADE YOUR DAD'S BELT?

I was a little frightened. I had never told that story to anyone. I wondered how Lucky knew about it. The craft kit that I got from the den mother, by some evil twist of fate, was a beautiful leather belt. Soft brown leather links, a big brass buckle, just a few simple steps, a whole afternoon of fun, the gratification of a job well-done, and the den mother could go into the other room and watch *Search for Tomorrow* or something. I was working on my belt, my friend Stanley was making a pair of mocassins, the other kids were putting together purses and billfolds and things like that. I had this mound of little leather pieces, all pre-cut in a butterfly shape with holes punched in the wings. I folded one wing and pushed it through the hole in the wing of another piece, then straightened the first piece out. I repeated that step a dozen, two dozen, maybe fifty times until I had this great long belt made. Then I just attached the pre-finished tongue to one end, the shiny buckle to the other, and I had an achievement to be proud of, a hand-made belt the likes of which couldn't be found at any price in any dime store in Springfield. The den mother complimented me on my skill. "It's a nice belt," she said.

"I'm going to give it to my old man," I said.

"That's nice," she said. "Now let's all get in a circle and say the Cub Scout pledge." That was always the high point of the afternoon for the den mothers.

I have gone on at such great length about the stupid belt because, of all the artifacts of my childhood, that belt is the most memorable, the most enduring, and the most meaningful. I had a bicycle once for six weeks when I was eleven. It broke somehow and my old man promised to fix it for me. He reaffirmed that promise every spring from the time I was in the sixth grade until I went

MY OLD MAN

away to college when I was eighteen. But that bicycle does not represent my growing up as completely as the brown link belt I made for him, the one he hung on the inside of the kitchen cupboard door. He never wore that belt, never once 'til the day he died. He hung it out of sight inside the cupboard. Every time I went in there for some cereal or something, it would swing like a pendulum in a funeral parlor, back and forth, the buckle scraping against the door, and I would remember every moment of the afternoon I made it for him. I would remember every single time my old man took that belt off the doorknob and used it. That belt *was* my old man, at least the important part of him, the real and the mythical parts of my old man, and whenever I felt the least little doubt about the orderliness of the universe, say, or any other adolescent thing, all I had to do was go into the kitchen and visit the belt. The belt told me everything I needed to know. I was fifteen years old before I told myself that the belt could lie. Now, a long time later, I am beginning to realize that I was wrong: the belt never lied, never. Just sometimes I wasn't listening right.

Was this chess game another special moment when I should have been listening? It isn't often that an electrical appliance casually brings up such a painful line of conversation. I looked at Lucky with a trace of annoyance: *of course* I remembered that day. I let him know that I didn't think it was his place to start on that topic now, especially as I had just whupped his derriere in only fourteen moves. Maybe that was why he was getting so unpleasant.

WANT TO GO AGAIN? he asked. Sure, I thought, it hadn't been much of a game, only fourteen moves. I figured I owned him another chance. I'm like that. I'm really a nice guy and I don't like to gloat over my victories, so I set up the chess pieces on their original squares and reset the computer. LET ME PLAY WHITE THIS TIME blinked Lucky. I shrugged. It seemed only fair. I can be very generous, especially when it won't cost me anything.

"Go ahead," I said. "Do your worst."

NO, I'LL DO MY BEST, he said. P-K4.

"I expected something more exotic," I said.

"Something hypermodern, something eccentric. P-QN3 or something."

I'M SORRY IF YOU'RE DISAPPOINTED. SHUT UP AND PLAY THE GAME.

I moved P-K4 too. "You don't have to get abusive," I said. "I think I may trade you in on a more civil model."

WE'RE ALL SENSITIVE, he said. PAY ATTENTION TO YOUR KING. YOUR KING WILL BE MORE THAN JUST AN IMPORTANT FIGURE IN A TRIVIAL GAME. YOUR KING IN THIS

CONTEST WILL ACTUALLY BE SOMEONE YOU KNEW AND LOVED. YOUR KING CONTAINS THE RESTLESS, HOVERING SPIRIT OF YOUR DEPARTED PARENT.

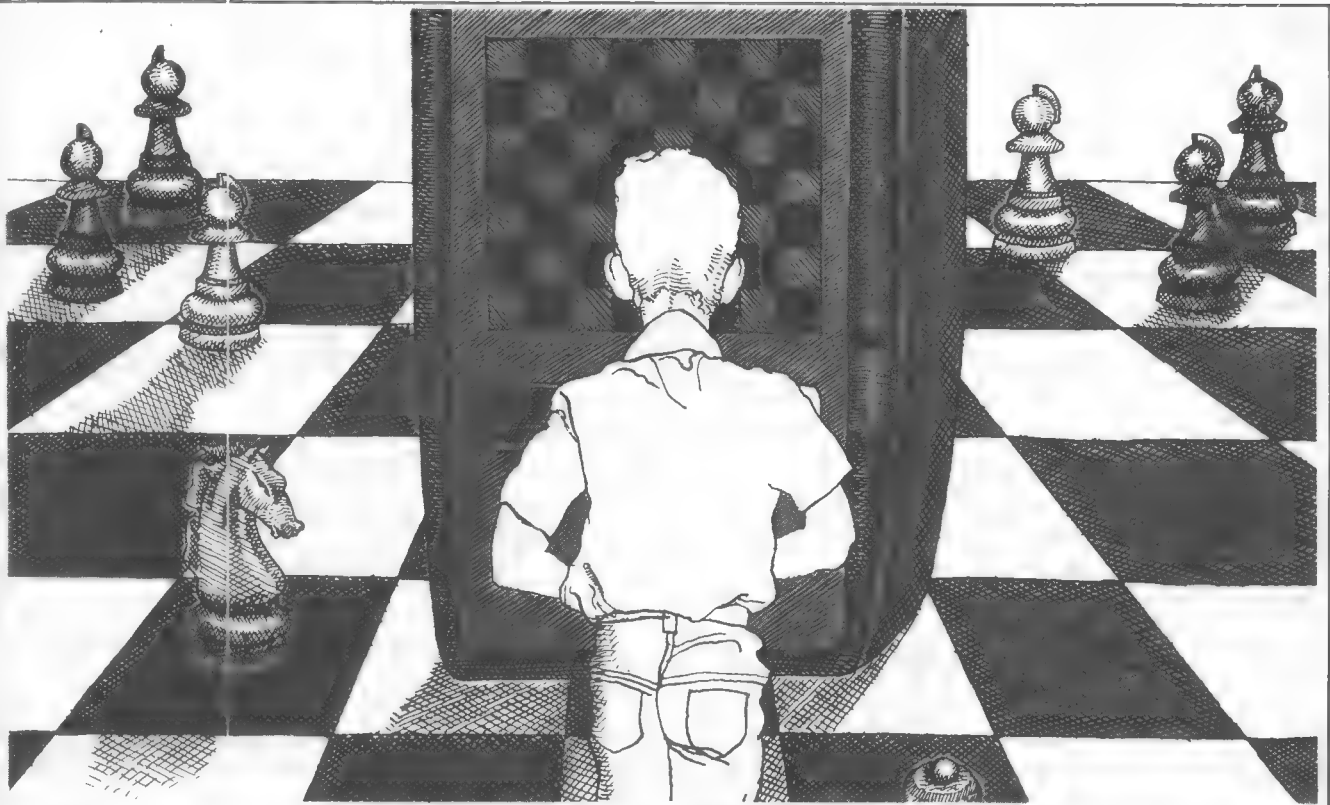
"My old man?" I asked. I was unsure because at one point in my life I received messages from beyond the grave from my deceased mother, in the form of the curves of highway exit ramps. But that's another story.

YES. DEAR OLD DAD.

"Am I speaking to him now? Is that you?"

Lucky was silent. I couldn't get him to admit that he had been possessed by the ghost of my old man. I waited for a moment, for a definite answer one way or the other. I thought back to the day Lucky had mentioned: what happened with the belt and my old man. I gave it to him for his birthday, wrapped up in left-over Christmas paper, tied with ribbon and fixed with a big stiff bow from a holiday liquor bottle. My mom always saved those bows and stuck them on everything. We always had to open the packages real careful and hand the bows back to her, so she could use them next Christmas or birthday or whatever. Some of those bows were older than I was. Right now, right this very minute, there is a box full of those bows up in the attic, where they've been since my mom died. My brother and I didn't know that to do with them. When she died I thought maybe I should cover her coffin with them and God would have to open it up real careful. Not that she or I believed in God, really, but that's all beside the point. My old man thanked me for the belt. Not excessively, you understand. None of this grabbing the eight-year-old boy around the neck with a lot of rough, manly affection, a tear streaming down my old man's cheek as he realizes the kid made the crummy belt with his own hands, none of this Hollywood sentiment and family togetherness business. Not on Federal Street. "Thanks," he said. I think he said thanks; he must have said thanks. I don't have any clear memory of him saying it, to tell you the truth, but he's dead now and I'm giving him the benefit of the doubt.

I would have liked it if he had stood up then, put his bottle of beer down on the coffee table, stood up, stripped his own belt from his pants, and slid my little Cub Scout project through the loops. He could have worn it *once*, goddamn it. For five minutes, would it have killed him? He was halfway through a bottle of Black Label; he put the belt down on the table in the middle of the crumpled wrapping paper—the bow was already back in the big box. The fun and excitement of my old man's birthday had faded fast. The small celebration quieted bit by bit until it was just another goddamn Saturday night and we were watching *Beat the Clock* and my brother and I were taking turns



ferrying beer in to my folks. "Thanks," he said once, and that was it.

YOU KNOW HE SAID THANKS, blinked Lucky. HE MUST HAVE SAID THANKS.

"Look," I said, "let's just leave it. If you're not my old man, where is he?"

I ALREADY TOLD YOU. STUCK INSIDE YOUR LITTLE BLACK PLASTIC KING. AND, IF YOU CARE, MY MOVE IS B-B4.

I wondered how I felt, knowing that my old man had nowhere better to go than inside a chess piece on Lucky's playing field. The Church had never even hinted at that possibility; I think I realized only that I would have to be especially careful: I was playing for my old man's soul. I moved B-B4, too. Lucky played P-QN4 and said DIDN'T EXPECT THAT, DID YOU, YOU PATSY? He was right about that. I went to my encyclopedia of chess openings and spent an hour trying to find what he was playing. I couldn't. Either I had missed it in the book or Lucky was blazing new trails into the frontiers of chess. That's not bad for a fifty-dollar plastic toy. Anyway, he chased my bishop away. I retreated, B-N3, to stay on the long diagonal. Lucky played N-QB3; I played N-KB3. Lucky brought out his other knight, N-B3. Then, floundering around without expert advice, I moved NxP. I expected that Lucky would follow with NxN, and I could play P-Q4 and get either the bishop or the knight, and we'd be even. But Lucky didn't do that.

I'M TRUTHFULLY SORRY TO SEE YOU BLUNDER SO BADLY SO EARLY IN THE GAME, he said. CHEW ON THIS ... (blink) BxP CHECK. HERE BEGINS THE HUMILIATION OF YOUR FATHER.

What has led up to the situation?

What reminded me of this incident with Lucky, something I admit I've tried to bury pretty deep the last few weeks, was this movie I saw just last night. It made me very upset, and I was sitting in the theater with a friend of mine, a girl, and I guess I was bothering her just a little bit because I kept muttering things. Somebody on the screen would do or say something and I'd go, "Yeah, sure," or something equally bright.

"What's the matter with you?" asked my girlfriend after a little while.

"It's this movie," I said. "I just can't believe these people." The movie was about this man who had a lot of trouble expressing his love for his family. He was very concerned with his own image, and with things like success and authority and all. So his son hates him a lot because he doesn't understand how much his father really loves him. His father bullies him all through the movie, and every goddamn time, the boy's mother comes into the kid's room and strokes his brow and all that and explains how his father has this problem about expressing his emotions. We're supposed to feel really sorry for this kid. I'll tell you one thing: first, that guy never laid a finger on his son, no backhand smacks at the dinner table or nothing; and two, nobody ever came into my room and soothed my brow or explained how my old man couldn't get in touch with his feelings. So naturally, by the end of the picture, the kid stands up to his father and rebels in some non-threatening way, and the man is a little shocked but secretly pleased, we are led to believe, and from then on they are just the greatest of pals and the son says, "I love you, Dad," and the guy says, "I love you, too, son," and the mother soothes both their brows and then we have the end titles, except by that time I am in the lobby buying

MY OLD MAN

a box of Sno-Caps and my stomach is starting to hurt a little. I couldn't figure out what that kid was getting so worked up about; I would have traded with him in a minute.

Just another example of how my life has been screwed up by books and movies. When I was in grade school I would go to bed at night and have fantasies that my parents would be different in the morning. I wanted to go to sleep, my mother and my old man downstairs watching television, and when I awoke in the morning they would be transformed into James Stewart and June Allyson. That's exactly who I yearned to have for parents. June Allyson in those short-sleeved blouses with a string of pearls around her neck, making breakfast; and my old man a sort of combination of Glenn Miller, Elwood P. Dowd, and Mr. Smith Goes to Washington. But instead I always came downstairs in the morning and there they'd be, in the kitchen bitching at each other, Norma Desmond in a bathrobe and Mighty Joe Young.

And Lucky had the nerve to threaten **HERE BEGINS THE HUMILIATION OF YOUR FATHER**. Let me tell you, it was pretty hard to humiliate my old man. Nobody ever managed it while he was alive, and I thought it was pretty cheap of Lucky to take shots at him now that he was dead and couldn't defend himself. **HE HAS YOU TO DEFEND HIM NOW**, said Lucky. I really needed to hear that. **BUT I'M NOT GOING TO VENTURE MY OPINION AS TO THE JOB YOU'RE DOING**.

"Thank God for small favors," I said. Lucky was making the most of his chance to gloat. He had a bishop held against my king like a knife to the throat. And my old man was inside the king.

YOU'RE BURNING DAYLIGHT, said Lucky.

"I'm just taking my time," I said. "After all, you said my old man's spirit was in that piece. I have to be careful. This isn't some nickel and dime game in a bus station."

IS THAT WHERE YOU LEARN YOUR CHESS? IN BUS STATIONS? HA HA!

So I ate his damn bishop, KxB.

YOU OUGHT TO THANK ME. I WILL PUNISH YOUR FATHER AS HE PUNISHED YOU. NxP, CHECK.

I had seen that coming, but there wasn't any way around it. "I don't want my old man punished," I said. "Let him rest in peace."

MAKE YOUR MOVE. I WILL SMITE HIM EVEN AS HE HATH SMITTEN YOU.

The situation, I felt, had definitely gotten out of hand. Lucky was right about the smiting, however. My old man was always a first-class smiter. I have been trying for more than twenty years now to remember just what it was that made

**My old man
loved that belt.
He would take it
off the doorknob with
a kind of reverence,
like a medieval knight
putting on his armor.
If I hadn't been
so scared I might
have been proud.**

my old man use that belt the first time. What did I do? Smuggle a quarter out of the coin bank to buy baseball cards? Some felony like that, I guess. But that first time is lost to me now, invisible behind innumerable identical episodes. First, my old man would just yell at me. Then the wry wit my old man was so famous for would start. "So what's your problem? You stupid?" was always one of his favorites. Once my brother tried to defuse the situation by agreeing readily to anything my old man said. "Yeah, Dad, I'm stupid," he said. Before he got the words out of his mouth he was laid out on the ground. I never said anything. "Look at you, you eat like the Russians are on the West Side. You ain't got sense God give a goose." Then he would walk—saunter, really—into the kitchen, pull open the cupboard door, and get the belt. This was my signal. This was the sign to run like hell. I had a few seconds while he was fetching that goddamn belt to hide myself away if I could. The problem was that I couldn't. There wasn't anywhere to go. I usually tore up the stairs to the bedroom, but that wasn't much good for hiding. There was only the one room up there, no way to keep my old man out, nowhere to go once I got there.

My old man loved that belt. He would take it off the doorknob with a kind of reverence, like a medieval knight putting on his armor or a priest assuming his robes. He took a good grip on the belt's leather tongue and made three quick, tight turns around his hand. Then he'd swing it just a little as he walked; he loved the *feel* of it in his hand, you could tell. If I hadn't been so scared I might have been proud. I know that before he used it for the first time he had forgotten completely that I had made it for him. I also know that even if he had remembered that, the idea of going after me with something I had made and given him as a gift would not have struck him as ungrateful. I never brought it up; he would only have shrugged. He probably would have thought I was a chucklehead to have given it to him in the first place, and I was only getting what I should have expected.

What is being thought?

CHOOSE YOUR MOVE AND AGAIN YOU WILL GET WHAT YOU SHOULD HAVE EXPECTED. YOUR KING IS DOOMED.

My stomach started to hurt. I didn't like playing with Lucky when he was in this frame of mind. All the fun seemed to have gone out of our relationship. Partly because I didn't know what the right move was, and partly because I knew his analysis of the game was probably right, I delayed.

YOU CANNOT HOPE TO ACHIEVE VICTORY BY STALLING. YOU CANNOT STARVE ME INTO SUBMISSION.

I don't know why it didn't occur to me simply to switch the stupid black machine off. Maybe I did think of it, but I figured it might consign my old man's spirit to something unimaginably horrible. But that looked like his ultimate fate, anyway. I wished that I knew some marvelous chess experts personally, so that I could call up Boris Spassky on the phone for some quick advice on the position. It seemed to me that there was really only one move: K-K3, because if my king moved anywhere else, Lucky would grab up the knight that now looked so lonely and forlorn on the far side of the field, and I'd get nothing in return. But that meant sending my old man even farther into the middle of the board. That must have been what Lucky had planned, what he meant when he predicted humiliation. First, Lucky would hound my old man, separate him from all his defenders, then bring him to his knees alone and helpless, and then dispatch him.

IF YOU WERE AS CLEVER AS YOU THINK YOU ARE, YOU WOULDN'T BE IN THIS POSITION. NOW YOU MUST DO THE BEST YOU CAN. IS K-K3 YOUR MOVE?

"Yes," I said. I really didn't feel like going on. "Would you care to make this a best-of-seven series?"

HA HA. YOU ARE TOO AMUSING. MY MOVE IS N×N. YOUR LACKEY DIES ANYWAY, HORSE AND RIDER SLAIN IN A WELTER OF BLOOD.

I knew that in this contest I would need all the lackeys I could get. I didn't have any to spare.

All of this is, of course, background to that one horrible moment of desperate insight I experienced at the age of fifteen. That was the instant I became a man, although no one else appeared to notice. It was not, I'd like to make clear, as heart-rending as when that kid has to go out and shoot the deer in *The Yearling*. Later on the kid realizes that his old man knew what he was talking about and they achieve this swell reconciliation and you get twenty different emotions thrown at you before

the story comes to an end. Things like that didn't happen to us on Federal Street, or at least we didn't brag about them to each other if they did. If there were any private enlightenings going on next door or across the street, I was never told. We played pickle-in-the-middle and flipped baseball cards and that was it. None of this going out and shooting the goddamn deer and coming back a man stuff. I saw that picture on a Saturday afternoon with my brother and my friend, Stanley. At the end of it my brother was in tears, but for the life of me I couldn't figure it. Stanley tried to tell me on the way home, but I just couldn't see it. To this day I can't see it.

What is wanted? By whom?

What I wanted, what I really wanted, was a way to turn the tide of bitter defeat. "Once more into the breach," I called to my troops, but they were all polishing their buckles back in the trenches. The only fighting forces I had mustered on this checkered battlefield was my king himself and one bishop way off to one side, probably mumbling matins while his liege is forced to take matters into his own hands.

At least I could take some of Lucky's lackeys. "K×N," I said, and that put me ahead, materially speaking. And, well, positionally, I couldn't see that Lucky, playing white, with the advantage of first move, was in a much stronger situation. He had a knight and a crazy queen's knight pawn developed. I had a bishop, and of course, my king.

Lucky could barely control himself. He expressed extreme glee by blinking HA HA HA HA at me for a full minute. I wanted to slap him silly. YOUR KING! he said when he finally calmed down. LOOK WHERE YOUR KING IS! I had to admit that K4 is not the safest place for him to be out wandering, almost entirely undefended. But Lucky must have known that at the first opportunity I would change that. I would bring my old man back to safety and begin a more typical development.

YOU HAVE BROKEN ABSOLUTELY EVERY SINGLE RULE OF RATIONAL CHESS. SOMEONE FROM THE CHESS FEDERATION SHOULD REMAND ME TO A FOSTER HOME.

I began to notice that Lucky's remarks were getting longer and were frequently far from the point at hand, which was this vital match with my old man's soul at stake.

NO DOUBT YOU SEEK TO FIND A SAFE HARBOR FOR YOUR FOUNDERING KING. I WILL NOT GIVE YOU THE OPPORTUNITY. MY NINTH MOVE IS B-N2 CHECK.

It was not a strong check, I thought. Lucky's bishop had merely moved over a square and up a

MY OLD MAN

square and lined up with my king. This time, for a change, I had freedom of movement, and I had an opportunity to grab off some more material before I gave my old man the sign to run for his own lines. KxN, the king took the second of white's knights and now stood on K5, ready for flight. Before he turned his back to the enemy, however, he had courageously accounted for three pieces—two knights and a bishop. A very laudable showing.

YOUR FATHER WILL BE FURIOUS WITH YOU, said Lucky.

I couldn't see why, other than that my old man never needed much of a reason. When I was fifteen years old, in the tenth grade, my old man got mad at me because I dropped a quart of milk all over the kitchen floor. I wasn't aware that this was a major offense; I was busy cleaning it up when I heard him explode. "Uh oh," I thought. We had progressed past the witticism phase before I had any idea that I was in trouble; I thought that my brother had done something in the other room. No such luck: it was my turn for the gauntlet. I knew I was in for it this time because my old man had me cut off. I was kneeling in the middle of the kitchen floor, and he was just coming around the corner from the dinette to get his belt. I stood up very slowly and dropped the dishrag in the kitchen sink, then tried to ease by my old man. There was no clever way to do this. He had a kind of half-smile on his face, I can see it right now as plain as day, his eyes closed a little, the bottom row of his yellowed teeth showing in an expression I could never read. I was helpless, and in desperation I thought I might just try zipping past him. He opened the cupboard door and got the belt, and that's when I made my move—such as it was. Suddenly his face went cherry-red and he lunged for me. "Where you think you're going?" he shouted. It was a very good question, but one we both had the answer to. I was going up the stairs, naturally. I ran, and my old man ran. He was mad, God only knows why, all I did was drop a lousy quart of milk on the floor. I think the fact that I just didn't stand there in the middle of the kitchen and take a few healthy whacks made him angrier.

I ran for the stairs and took them two at a time. He was right behind me. When I got to the turn in the stairs, I stopped. Don't ask me why, because I don't have the answer. I didn't then and I don't now. I stopped and faced my old man. He was surprised. I could see the confusion in his soft, cow-like brown eyes. He didn't stop to worry about it, though. I watched his right arm go up and back, I can see it in slow motion now in my memory, a measured pause, I saw the beginning of the powerful down-stroke. That brass belt buckle was slicing

through the air, coming to take me right across the cheek. I had it all the way, like a good fielder chasing down a long fly ball toward the line; I timed it good, I reached out, and I caught that goddamn thing in my hand. I caught it good and solid, and I held it.

I felt like I was dreaming. This was something completely new, something no one had ever hinted at before, that I could take control, that I didn't have to be hit if I didn't want to be, that I had a mind and a life of my own and I could make decisions. I was simply stunned. And all of this rushed through my mind in the moment of catching the belt buckle.

My old man still held the other end of the belt. There we stood on the stairs, planted in the midst of the old scenario, but now something terribly different had happened. And we stared at each other, each holding an end of that pitiful brown leather belt.

The joy and the promise of my turning-point moment evaporated in the next few seconds, when I knew for certain that it had floated by above my old man's head. He didn't have the faintest idea of what had just happened. The whole business didn't count for anything unless he was ready to endorse it. Reluctantly, I let go of the belt buckle and it dropped to the carpeted stair. I took a deep breath. My life, my future in that house and in that family lay on the stair, too, in the form of my old man's belt. I turned around and went up the rest of the way to the bedroom. My old man followed, and we played out the scene up there without any further interruptions.



All that I could carry away from that moment was the knowledge that I had been given a choice, and I would have to make a decision more painful to me than my old man's belt had ever been: I could stay and be ruled or, when the time came, I could leave. The decision was painful, I had been right about that, but it wasn't difficult.

My relationship with my old man always included some measure of pain, even in the recent years when the only contact I've had with him has been in memories. In some ways it's even worse; my own failures grow with time, my victories seem smaller and more ridiculous. When Lucky told me that my old man's spirit was waiting in my chess piece, his Judgment subject to the outcome of the game, I felt a lot of pain. I knew that I was not equipped to champion my old man, that in his single moment of absolute need, I could do nothing other than fail him.

YOU ARE TRYING TO TOUCH THE EMOTIONS OF A RECTANGULAR PLASTIC BOX OF ELECTRONIC COMPONENTS, said Lucky. YOUR FOOLISHNESS ASTOUNDS ME.

"Any box that can be astounded must have emotions somewhere," I said. "You can stop chipping away at my self-esteem. Remember, I can throw you away. You can't throw me away."

TOGETHER WE CAN THROW YOUR FATHER AWAY. YOU HAVE ONE MOMENT LEFT TO THINK OF HIM BEFORE I ANNOUNCE MY MOVE. YOU MIGHT TRY PRAYING. I ADVISE YOU TO DO SO.

"Pompous ass," I said.

Q-B3. CHECKMATE. LISTEN CLOSELY: DO YOU HEAR THE SHRIEKS OF YOUR FATHER AS HIS SOUL PLUMMETS HOPELESSLY DOWN TO HELL?

"No," I said.

THAT'S RIGHT. THE UNIVERSE IS MORE REASONABLE THAN TO LET SOMEONE LIKE YOU DECIDE IN SINGLE COMBAT THE ETERNAL FATE OF ANYONE OR ANYTHING.

"Then where is my father's spirit?"

Lucky just blinked for seven and a half minutes and said P-K4, trying to start a new game. From then on that's all I could get from him, except for the cute pre-programmed remarks. But even those have been limited to the ones the Michikeito Corporation intended there to be. In a way, I miss his company—if not his distorted sense of humor. I never found out if my old man's spirit had really been in my king, or if that had been just some mechanical bitchiness Lucky dreamed up to repay me for using that guy Distle's game to beat him.

What will happen? What will be done?

Thy will be done, on earth as it is in Heaven. And speaking of Heaven, I imagine that my old man is there now, looking down on me, reading this over my shoulder, knowing exactly what I'm feeling, understanding at last a few things that he never understood before, fixing on the truth I am telling and on the lies I am slipping in, too. He should know that I never hated him, that I never hoped that anything bad should ever happen to him, that I had small resentments but no burning rage. The only thing he ever did to me that still hurts is rob me of my single moment. I never wanted very much, just to hear the small rumble of pieces sliding into place. My mother should have seen that, she should have come upstairs later and stroked my brow and said, "There, there. Today you have become a man."

That was nineteen years ago, believe it or not. After that day my old man still chased me and beat me with that belt. I still ran, even though I knew that at any time I could stop and turn and catch the heavy buckle again. I even knew that if I wanted to, I could pull the whole goddamn belt away from him, leaving him empty-handed, looking up at me on the stairs and wondering what had happened to order in the universe. I didn't want to take his belt away; he had never shown me anything else. It was all he had.

So a few years ago my old man dies and I travel back to Springfield. We go to the funeral and we go to the cemetery, and afterward my mother has the relatives and friends over to the house. There is a lot of beer and some sandwiches and cake and stuff like that, and my brother is there with his wife and kid, and I'm there feeling very out of place. I don't belong there anymore and everyone is making that very clear to me. Along about twilight, when they've all had enough beer, they begin telling stories about my old man.

I got up on the pretext of getting myself something from the refrigerator. I went into the kitchen and opened the cupboard door. I closed my eyes, but I could hear the *shik, shik, shik* of the belt scratching in its slow swing against the door. All these years later, the belt is still there. There are no final reconciliations on Federal Street.

I touched the brown leather belt lightly once and then I closed the cupboard door. I could hear my mother and my aunt telling another story about my old man.

I've been playing a game of chess with Lucky while I've been writing this. He just made his move, B-B4, and added, YOU SHOULD HAVE LEFT HIM IN THE GRAVEYARD, LIKE YOUR MOTHER AND AUNT DID. THEY HAD THE RIGHT IDEA. But I don't know. Seems like when they get started they don't leave a guy nothing. 17

The Other Train Phenomenon

by Richard Bowker

... IN WHICH A LONE RESEARCHER STUMBLES UPON THE HORRIFYING TRUTH BEHIND URBAN AMERICA'S VERSION OF THE JELLY-SIDE-DOWN THEORY.

The subway train had broken down in the tunnel. I was standing up, my back was aching, and I was late. The air conditioning had gone off when the train broke down, and little rivulets of sweat were running down my body, seeking out the routes that would cause me the most discomfort. Then a nut started talking to me.

He was one of those thin, hollow-eyed, intense fellows, the kind who sells his poetry on street corners or runs off revolutionary manifestos on the mimeograph in his basement. He was wearing sneakers, dirty chinos, and, despite the heat, a flannel shirt with the collar button buttoned. Not someone I wanted to pass the time of day with.

"These trains are a disgrace. Aren't they?" he demanded. His voice was thin and quavering. His beady black eyes were constantly in motion, scanning the faces around him suspiciously.

"Um," I replied noncommittally, getting ready for a tirade against the imperialist regime that let our subways rot while it suppressed the aspirations of freedom-loving peoples around the world.

"You ride the subway often?"

"Um, uh-huh."

This was evidently the right answer. He approved. "So do I," he said, his eyes darting here and there. That made us soulmates, I guess. His eyes suddenly focused intensely on mine. "When you were waiting for this train, did you happen to notice—did a train come in from the other direction first?"

I felt stupid having to answer, but the intensity of his interest made me think back to when I was waiting in the station. "Well, I guess so," I replied. "The other train always comes first."

He nodded emphatically. "That's right, that's right. It always happens. The other train always comes first. But why should that be? According to the so-called Laws of Probability, if the trains run as often in both directions, and your time of arrival is random with respect to their schedules, your

train should come first about half the time. Right?"

"Well," I offered, somewhat puzzled, "maybe it just *seems* as if—"

"Aha!" he cried triumphantly, his black eyes flashing. "That's what *they* would say. *They'd* like you to believe that. But I have *facts*. Facts which *they* cannot dispute. For five years I have noted which train came first whenever I used the subway. Here are the facts. Right here!" He brandished a thick notebook that I hadn't noticed before. He flipped through the pages. They were filled with pencil markings and scrawled figures. "I have re-computed the results as of last Thursday. Eighty-two percent of the time the other train came first. Eighty-two percent! Do you know the odds against that figure arising by chance?"

Offhand I didn't.

"One in ten million!" he shouted, causing a few people to look up from their *National Enquirers*. He glanced around nervously and continued in a lower tone. "Does that sound like the so-called Laws of Probability are holding in this case?"

I had to admit it didn't.

"Of course not. Well then, there must be an explanation. A new theory must be proposed. One that takes into account the fact that the train I am waiting for is far less likely to arrive before the corresponding train in the opposite direction."

My heart sank. He was going to explain his theory.

"Bad luck, good luck, these terms are meaningless in Probability," he went on. "It is all supposed to even out in the end. But obviously it doesn't for some people. I am one of those people. A loser. An outcast. Nothing has ever gone right for me. Clearly nothing ever will. Just your imagination, some people say. Untrue. Eighty-two percent. That is proof. Statistical proof of my bad luck.

"But I'm not the only one who is subject to



The Other Train Phenomenon

what I call the 'Other Train Phenomenon.' You noticed it. All regular subway riders notice it. Are other subway riders like me: losers, failures? Of course they are. If they were successful they wouldn't ride the subway every day. They'd drive to work, or better still, they wouldn't go to work at all. Take a look around you. These people are losers."

I did. They were.

"My theory, then, is that the Laws of Probability do not hold at the human level. Oh, they work for most things—for height and weight and predicting the number of dog bites in New York City. But in these little everyday events—the things that really matter to people—bad luck tends to occur more often for certain people ... those who ride the subway regularly."

Well, it had a surface plausibility, but I certainly wasn't the one to judge. "Have you published anything about this theory of yours?"

His eyes stopped moving long enough to glare at me. The wrong question. He extracted a sheaf of soiled letters from the notebook and waved them at me. I caught sight of a couple of lines: "However, we do not think the subject matter is quite ..." "Since you lack any credentials for the field you are ..."

"This," he said, "is what *they* think of my theory. No journal would touch it. I applied for grants. I wanted to do a study of other subway riders, to see if their percentages were similar to mine. None of the foundations were interested. What does that suggest to you?"

I was surprised by the question. I knew what it suggested to me, but I knew that wasn't what he wanted to hear. I shrugged uncomfortably.

His eyes swept the car and he sidled up closer to me. "A conspiracy," he whispered. His breath smelled of onions. He raised one eyebrow, to signal that he was zeroing in on something important. "Do you think," he asked, "that the people who run the academic journals and big foundations take the subway very often?"

I shook my head. I supposed they didn't.

"Of course not," he snapped. "They're not losers. They work in plush offices. They have comfortable, tenured jobs. They're chauffeured to work, or maybe walk along tree-lined paths through their campuses. They wouldn't be caught dead squeezing into one of these broken-down trains at rush hour day after day.

"Do you see what I'm getting at?" he demanded excitedly. "*They know!*" He shouted that out, which made him whirl around in fear; then he got control of himself and continued in a lower tone. "They know, all right, but they keep it a

secret. It follows, doesn't it? If there are losers, there should be winners, too. People who don't have to wait for trains. People who get tables in crowded restaurants, whose cars break down right next to all-night gas stations, whose babies get born late in December so they can claim them as tax deductions for the whole previous year. *The people who run things.*

"They know," he said, and I could see the control slipping away again. "Part of being a winner is knowing about the losers, about the so-called Laws of Probability. They talk about it in their clubs when the waiters aren't listening, you know, they joke about it in board meetings and executive washrooms. At the country club, by the swimming pool. All the places where you and I can never go. 'Isn't it nice that we are the winners,' they say. 'Isn't it nice that the losers don't realize it. By the way, I hear that some loser is nosing around about the Other Train Phenomenon. Written an article or something. It must not appear. That wouldn't do. He must be stopped.'"

The train suddenly lurched forward, and the nut grabbed my arm, his eyes wide with fear. "They're after me!" he screamed. "I have broken the unwritten law. I have uncovered their secret manipulations of the universe. And they will destroy me for it! They will destroy me!"

The wheels of the train started to squeal as it rounded the curve into the next station, and the noise drowned out the rest of what he had to say. By the time we slowed down he was sobbing. "Help me. They're after me. You must help me."

"This is my stop," I said, even though it wasn't, and I disengaged my arm as quickly as I could. He seemed to be too weak to resist.

I turned to leave, and bumped into two young men who had evidently walked up from the other end of the car. They were both wearing dark three-piece pin-striped suits and were carrying folded *Wall Street Journals*. They didn't look like they rode the subways very often. "Pardon me," they both said politely, although I was the one who had bumped into them. I rushed past them and got off the train.

I noticed them start talking to the nut, who was still in pretty bad shape. They both appeared interested in him, however. One of them had taken the nut's notebook and was leafing through it quickly. He closed it and placed it neatly inside his *Wall Street Journal* as the train pulled out.

A train came in the station from the other direction, and after a few minutes another train heading my way appeared. The air conditioning was working, thank God.

Subway riders must be grateful for small favors. **17**



who's made nightmares come true

WITH THE PG-RATED FANTASY OF 'SWAMP THING,'
THE MAN WHO MADE 'THE HILLS HAVE EYES' AND 'DEADLY BLESSING'
TURNS FROM CURDLING BLOOD TO WARMING HEARTS.

Interviewer **Tom Seligson** reports:

Considering the countless horror films made in recent years, it's not surprising that few survive their initial release to become classics of the genre. But classics do exist; one thinks of George Romero's *Night of the Living Dead* and Tobe Hooper's *Texas Chainsaw Massacre*. Both of which have achieved cult status over the years.

Another horror film that has developed a special reputation is *The Last House on the Left*. Made in 1971 at a cost of only ninety thousand dollars, the film was a grisly update of Bergman's *The Virgin Spring* and depicted a family's revenge upon a murderous teenage gang. What distinguished the film, even more than the millions it's grossed, was its graphic violence. *The Last House on the Left* was the first horror film to present violence in a realistic, almost documentary fashion. Filmgoers at the time were deeply shaken by it.

The director, Wes Craven, had never made a movie before. In fact, he had little background in films. Raised in an orthodox Baptist family in a

suburb of Cleveland, his religious upbringing was so strict that as a boy he was forbidden to see movies, and it wasn't until he was a junior in college that he saw his first movie in a theater. The film was *To Kill a Mockingbird*, and he was "bowled over by it"—though not in quite the same way audiences were later affected by his first film.

Though surprised and perhaps even alarmed by what he had produced, Craven returned to the horror genre in his next film, *The Hills Have Eyes*. Once again the film concerned a family fighting for survival, once again the violence was graphically realistic, and once again his film became a box-office success. Since then, Wes Craven has not wanted for work.

He followed *The Hills Have Eyes* with a television movie called *Stranger in the House*, a witchcraft thriller starring Linda Blair. His next feature, *Deadly Blessing*, was released last summer. Set amidst a fanatical religious sect, the film starred Maren Jensen, Lois Nettleton, and Ernest Borgnine.

Craven's latest film is *Swamp Thing*, a screen adaptation of a popular DC comic book. It stars Louis Jourdan and Adrienne Barbeau. Appropriately enough, the film was shot in the swamps of Charleston, South Carolina, and it was on location that we caught up with its director.

Wes Craven is forty-one years old, divorced, and the father of two teenagers. He's so pleasant looking, good natured, and soft spoken that it's hard to imagine Craven as the director of two of the most violent films ever made. But he's extremely articulate, especially on the subject of films as a means of exploring both fantasies and nightmares.

TZ: Tell us a bit about your background and how you got involved in films in the first place.

Craven: I was born and raised in Cleveland, and I began writing at a very early age. I wrote short stories when I was a teenager. I wrote for the high school newspaper and the college literary magazine, and I ended up getting a scholarship to the

Wes Craven

writing seminars at Johns Hopkins. I studied for a master's degree there under the poet Elliot Coleman, who was a friend of E. E. Cummings and T. S. Eliot. It was a very eye-opening experience for me, because all we did under the program was read—modern novelists, Theater of the Absurd, modern poets—and then write work of our own. I wrote a novel, and the comment on it was "This would make a hell of a movie." It was very strange, because before that I had absolutely no idea of going into films.

TZ: What was the title of the novel?

Craven: *Noah's Ark: The Diaries of a Madman.*

TZ: Did you try to get it published?

Craven: Yeah, but nothing ever happened with it. I went through years of writing stuff and sending it off, but without much success. So after graduate school, I got married and began teaching college. I taught humanities and modern drama at Clarkson College, which is in upstate New York. About four years later, just for the hell of it, I made a little film with some of my students. It was a *Mission Impossible* type story, and we got all the townspeople in on it and a lot of the student body. It was forty-five minutes long and cost about three hundred dollars. We started showing it, charging fifty cents, and funnily enough, everybody started coming. We ended up making about three thousand dollars on it. More importantly, I got bitten by the bug.

So I quit my job and went down to New York City to try to get into the film business. I spent the whole summer going around to all the documentary places, but I couldn't get a job. I went back upstate and taught a year of high school, then went back down the next year. But this time I had a contact; a brother of a student friend of mine was Harry Chapin, the singer.

TZ: How did he help you?

Craven: At that time, Chapin was a real hotshot film editor, and he let me work with him while he explained how film was edited. Of course, I wasn't getting paid or anything. However, while I was there, the office we were in fired its messenger, a seventeen-year-old kid. Chapin came in and asked me if I knew any kids who wanted to work as a messenger. I said, "I'll do it." So even though I was thirty at the time, I



Craven's first film, *The Last House on the Left* (featuring Swamp Thing baddie David Hess, at left, above), has been reissued in an edited—and distinctly less violent—version with the ad slogan, "It's only a movie." "We were doing it on a ten-cent budget ... I never expected anybody to go see it."

took the job as a messenger. Meanwhile, I was learning how to sync up dailies.

About a year later, I got a chance to switch jobs and actually work at syncing up on a little film that Sean Cunningham was doing. Cunningham was twenty-nine years old, and he was doing some little pasted-together picture with one cameraman and himself. They called me in as an assistant, and during the next ten months he and the cameraman would keep having fallings out, and the cameraman would leave. I'd say, "Well, I can edit a little." And I'd start cutting the picture. Then I'd say, "Well, I can write a little." And I'd get to write some.

TZ: Was this Cunningham's film *Together*?

Craven: Right. It cost about seventy thousand dollars and made, I think, around seven million. The distribution company was Hallmark Producing, up in Boston. They said to us, "You know, you guys should do a real knock-down drag-out horror film. We'll give you fifty thousand dollars to do it." Sean came to me and said, "Listen, I think we can do this in about three weeks for forty thousand, and we'll pocket the rest. Can you come up with anything? I said I'd try. I was going out to Long Island for the weekend, and while I was there I wrote the first draft of *Last House on*

the Left. It was about fifty pages long.

TZ: Were you a horror buff yourself at this point?

Craven: No, not at all. I was just given the genre and told to come up with a story that takes place mostly out of doors and uses a very small cast. We were going to shoot it in sixteen millimeter with all amateur actors. That's how it started. So I wrote the script, and when I went to pick it up at the Xerox place, two days in a row it wasn't ready. The guy confessed that everybody was reading it. I realized then that it was good. We sent it off to Boston, and they loved it too. They even gave us another forty thousand. So for ninety thousand dollars, we made *Last House on the Left*. It's still playing today. In fact, I think it's number ten on the top grossing fifty this week in *Variety*.

TZ: Were you surprised by the film's success?

Craven: Absolutely. I never expected anybody to go see it. We were doing it on a ten-cent budget, and I'd never made a film before, never directed, not even edited a whole feature. We never expected anything that big. But all of a sudden it just took off. I was living in a commune on the Lower East Side, living on seventy-five dollars a week, and all of a sudden I got a check for twenty thousand



A family of barbarians: Janus Blythe as Ruby . . .



. . . and Michael Berryman as Pluto in *The Hills Have Eyes*: "Each family had its own integrity and its own system of values, but ultimately they became very similar."

dollars. The next week it was another big check. It was all very unreal. Very strange.

TZ: What about the audience response to *Last House on the Left*? How did you react to that?

Craven: In a way, it's haunted me for a long time. As you know, the film is very violent. Not in a gory way, but because it's human. You know, the characters really suffer. The film gripped and upset a lot of people.

Consequently, Sean and I spent two or three years after that writing and developing scripts of social importance. However, no one was interested in them. I finally went out to California and made *The Hills Have Eyes*.

TZ: How many years were there in between?

Craven: *House* came out in '71 and *The Hills Have Eyes* was produced in '75.

TZ: So you tried to break out of the

horror genre in between, but found there was no interest on the part of producers?

Craven: Right. I wrote Liz Torres's cabaret comedy act two times. I edited a lot of films, edited trailers. Wrote a lot of scripts for pay. But I didn't get anything produced until *The Hills Have Eyes*.

TZ: Tell us about the origin of that film.

Craven: *The Hills Have Eyes* was originally written as a near-future drama, taking place during the 1984 Presidential primaries. People were trying to get out of New York, because it was too terrible to live there anymore. They had to have passports to cross the George Washington Bridge and state passports to cross from one state to another. Everybody was trying to get to the Sun Belt. The family in the original script decided to sneak along back roads to get to California. It was like *Grapes of Wrath* set in 1984. However, we ended up moving it back to the present, because the producers felt it would be too expensive to set it in the future.

TZ: *The Hills Have Eyes* concerns a civilized family confronting a barbaric one. The theme of families living on the outskirts of civilization is one you often find in American literature as well as in films. Were you deliberately working in that genre?

Craven: In a way. I was very much interested in dealing with mirror images of people. The two families actually were mirror images of each other, the darker side and the lighter side. Each family had its own integrity and its own system of values, but ultimately they became very similar. The All-American family, the "white bread" family, became progressively more and more vicious. They bragged about their dogs. They had guns secreted away. And their paranoia eventually turned them violent. What I'm saying in the film is that there's a brutal, barbaric nature in all of us.

TZ: I can see that. Especially since you never once asked us to really dislike either family.

Craven: No. I don't want the audience to totally dislike anyone in my films. Even the villains in *Last House on the Left*. After they've killed those girls and done horrible things, the next minute they're doing something very human, like washing up in the

Wes Craven



Michael Berryman reappeared as one of the fanatical Hittites—spying, above, on some liberal-minded new neighbors—in *Deadly Blessing*: "I like pictures that deal with situations that at first seem real and tame, but gradually turn more and more nightmarish."

lake, or trying to be gentlemanly at the table, trying to pass for middle class. Despite what they did, suddenly you sympathize with them again.

TZ: What effect did *The Hills Have Eyes* have on your career?

Craven: Quite a lot. It was written up in a lot of magazines, so I got a chance to direct a television show with Linda Blair and Carol Lawrence—*Stranger in the House*. It was the first time I'd worked with name stars. We had a twenty-one day shooting schedule, and turned out a really nice film. It's played all over the world as a feature, under the title *Summer of Fear*. Linda Blair plays a girl whose aunt and uncle are killed in a crash out of state, and her cousin comes to live with her. In subtle ways, things start going wrong for her and she begins to realize that the cousin's a witch. Of course, nobody believes her. But her horse goes crazy, her father falls in love with the new girl, and everything goes wrong, until eventually, in the last act, she takes the cousin on as a witch and does battle with her. What I like most about the film is the paranoid angle. Is it all her imagination, like everybody's telling her? Or is the girl really a witch? The uncertainty continues through most of the film.

TZ: Your most recent picture was *Deadly Blessing*. Tell us about its origin.

Craven: The same producer that I did

Stranger in the House for, Max Keller of Interplanetary Productions, owned a property called *Deadly Blessings*. It was sort of a *Charlie's Angels* rip-off about three girls in the country, one of whom was married to an Amish fellow who was murdered in the first act. The two girlfriends come to stay with her, more murders occur, and they solve the crime and survive. I did a one-week rewrite on it as a favor for him. I think I charged him five hundred dollars for what I did. It floated around for a year, and all of a sudden Polygram picked it up. So I went down to Texas, and after three weeks of preproduction we did the picture. It turned out very well. Polygram is very excited about it, because it looks like about a five- to eight-million-dollar picture, although it cost only about three million. It stars Ernest Borgnine and Lois Nettleton, and a guy from *The Hills Have Eyes*, Michael Berryman, plays a part in it.

It's my kind of film. It has wonderful dream sequences, which I love. One of the girls is a little crazy and half the time experiences horrors that turn out to be nightmares. And there's a lot of use of animals, which I like to do in my pictures. There's a great scene in a bathtub where Maren Jensen is taking a bath, and you see somebody sneak in. It's the Hitchcock shower scene updated. Instead of using a knife, her assailant

puts a water moccasin on the floor. Of course, she's still bathing, and as she's covering her face with a washcloth and singing, you see the water moccasin crawl across the bathroom floor, up over the tub, and down into the water. It swims right between her legs and disappears. I won't tell you the rest of it, only that it sends everybody right up the wall.

TZ: I can imagine. You said "my kind of film." What do you consider *your* kind of picture?

Craven: I like pictures that deal with situations that at first seem real and tame, but gradually turn more and more nightmarish. They're sort of half fantasy, half real, and deal with very deep-seated subconscious fears. I'm very interested in dreams and nightmares. I think films *are* dreams. They're manufactured realities that we created to help allay our fears and deal with our terrors in a magical way. I find that the mixture of dreams within films does precisely that.

TZ: Is *Deadly Blessing* as graphically violent as your two previous films?

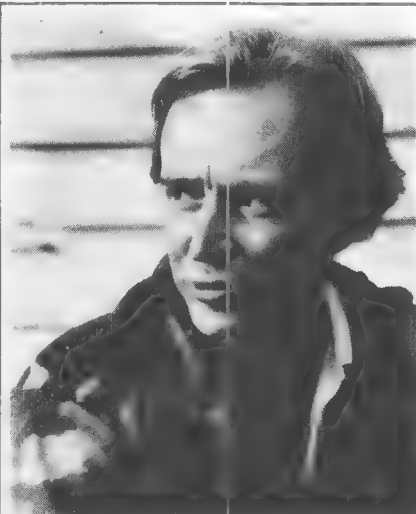
Craven: No, it has very little actual violence. There's a lot of tension and suspense and scares, but it has very little graphic violence in it. I'm very interested in getting away from that. I think it's a dead-end street. Sean Cunningham's picture, *Friday the 13th*, helped to revive that kind of horror picture, but otherwise it's been exhausted for some time. Right now I'm more interested in Hitchcockian kinds of terror and suspense.

TZ: Would you list Hitchcock as one of your prime influences?

Craven: Definitely. Along with Bunuel and Bergman. My whole background in film came quite late in life, because I wasn't allowed to see films when I was a kid. I didn't start to see them until I was in the university. So I saw all the "foreign film club" type classics: Truffaut, Bunuel, Hitchcock. They became my inspiration.

TZ: This brings us to *Swamp Thing*, your current film. How did you come to make it?

Craven: I had been working on a film for a year in Colombia, South America. It was about dope smuggling, and had an Italian producer. I'd just gone to Rome, where our preproduction had fallen through. We'd set up offices and hired the cast, only to find out that the pro-



Craven on the *Swamp Thing* set: "Kids have a lot of unfettered urges and wishes. Their parents think they're monsters anyway, so they can easily relate to someone who rushes into a room and smashes the whole thing to smithereens."

ducer didn't have his money. Coming back through New York, my agent told me about these two producers, Michael Uslan and Ben Melniker, that I should stop in and see. I went to see them, and they showed me the *Swamp Thing* comic books. We talked about what would happen if a man were half plant and half human. I said, joking around, "Well, maybe he would be photosynthetic and get weak if he were kept in the dark a long time." We started tossing around ideas, and they said, "Why don't you write up a treatment?" On the plane to L.A., I wrote it up and mailed it back to them. They liked it. I did a first draft, and they liked that, too. It just took off from there. **TZ:** Were you familiar with the *Swamp Thing* comic book before?

Craven: Not at all. I had read comic books as a kid, but mostly Superman, Batman, and Blackhawk. But what fascinated me about *Swamp Thing* in terms of a movie was that he was a monster who had a human being inside. A monster that maintains all of his human capabilities, mental capabilities, and emotions. It had what I saw as a "Beauty and the Beast" feeling that would enable me to explore how a human being feels about his darker side or his ugly side being exposed, and whether or not someone can love that. That was the really interesting thing to me—the love story. One of the major changes I made from the comic book was to change Cable from a male character to the part now played by Adrienne Barbeau. She provides the love interest for the monster.

TZ: Another change seems to be the creation of a second, villainous monster. I'm talking about Arcane, who I

gather also becomes transformed.

Craven: Right. What I've done is to take characters from throughout the many stories in the comic books. Arcane is a villain who appears in one of them; I simply took that name and created a character. But there is a sequence in the comic book where one of the villains changes into a werewolf-type monster, so in fact there is precedent for it.

TZ: What about the look of the comic book? Do you plan on somehow trying to translate that?

Craven: Sure. We're going for a sort of stylistic low angle. Strange shadows, weird colors, and fogs. Very much of a comic-book look, but in tandem with a very realistic human approach. For example, everybody who's in contact with the monster reacts to it very much like you and I would—with disbelief. We're trying to keep all the emotions very human, rather than making them camp or exaggerated. We're generally underplaying it a lot. Louis Jourdan, for instance, is playing Arcane as a very aristocratic and subtle villain, not the moustache-tweaking villain of yore.

TZ: Why do you think *Swamp Thing* caught on as a comic and became a cult?

Craven: I think because he's sort of a green James Dean, an outsider you can identify with. There's a part of all of us, I think, that feels that we're the ugly duckling, that nobody can really relate to the real us, and that we're sort of a creepazoid just wandering around in a world of our own making. And I think *Swamp Thing* has that feeling to it. Inside this monster there's this beautiful person he knows is there, but which he can't convey to anybody else. It's like when people look at Wes Craven, the filmmaker, and say, "How can you make those terribly violent films?" It's like I'm a *Swamp Thing*.

All of us have this, but especially kids. They're still forming their personalities, and have a lot of unfettered urges and wishes. Their parents think they're monsters anyway, so they can easily relate to someone who rushes into a room and smashes the whole thing to smithereens, or who goes out and gets completely muddled. There's a likability about a monster who's very primitive and direct in all his needs and desires. He feels different from everyone else around

him, and that's how kids feel. They're in an adult world, and they're expected to conform.

TZ: When a comic book comes to life, everyone has his own preconceived ideas as to whom they would cast. How did you come to choose the stars in *Swamp Thing*—for example, Louis Jourdan as Arcane?

Craven: Louis Jourdan actually came across the table at a late date. He wasn't a first choice. We went through a long list of typical villains—Telly Savalases—and we were turned down by a lot of people who didn't want to do a horror film, especially one with a monster. Christopher Lee, for instance, liked the script a lot, but didn't want to do something where he'd have to be a monster. But when we eventually thought of Louis Jourdan, he suddenly seemed a natural. And he saw something in the script that fascinated him. I often get that reaction to my scripts. An actor might not want to do a horror movie, but he'll read the script and see that the character gets a lot of good moments. I like to write solid dramatic moments for all the characters in my films.

TZ: Was Adrienne Barbeau a first choice for the female Cable?

Craven: No. Again the producers had their sights on some of the foremost names in the business. Adrienne Barbeau we came to later—but what a fantastic choice she's been! She's a real trouper. She does all her own stunts, including drowning scenes in water I wouldn't want to stick my hand in.

TZ: The film seems to have more special effects and stunt sequences than any of your earlier films. Has that made it more of a challenge?

Craven: Definitely. It's a very difficult shoot, the most difficult I've ever done. I'm working quite often up to my ass in alligators and water snakes. There's a lot of deer flies and bugs, a lot of sickness in the crew. We're working with costumes that tend to fall apart in the water after a take or two, and big elaborate sets that make it hard just getting off a shot. So we're behind schedule and a little overbudget. It's been very arduous. You know, I run a lot, five to six miles a day, sometimes even fifteen, and this has taxed my physical limits.

Wes Craven

TZ: What are your future projects after *Swamp Thing*?

Craven: The first thing I'm going to do is go lie on a beach somewhere. After that I have a project called *Nightmare on Elm Street*, which I'd like to do next. I wrote it myself. It's about a teenage girl who has nightmares that start to come true. Everybody thinks she's insane. But she takes on the person in the nightmares and tries to bring him out into the real world, where she can prove to people that he is alive and that he is committing murders.

TZ: As a director, you seem to prefer to write your own scripts. Are there any books in the horror genre or other novels that you'd be interested in adapting?

Craven: I'm not at the stage where I can possess those properties. I'd love to do a Stephen King novel, but someone else would have to buy it and approach me about it. However, I don't mind writing my own scripts. I like my ideas, and I'm more in-

terested in solving my own problems than in trying to solve someone else's.

TZ: What other horror or suspense filmmakers do you like?

Craven: Hitchcock, as I said earlier. And I like many of Roman Polanski's films. *The Tenant* and *Repulsion*, for example.

TZ: What about some of the other classics of the genre? I would guess that *Freaks* might be a favorite of yours. Is that true?

Craven: Not so much. I consider *Texas Chainsaw Massacre* to be a brilliant film. And *Night of the Living Dead* I enjoyed immensely. I'm interested in films that go below the surface of madness or insanity. When I saw *Texas Chainsaw Massacre*, it frightened me so much that I felt the people who made it must have been insane. Of course, I also like *Last House on the Left*. In terms of low-budget scary films, I think those three are my favorites.

TZ: Some critics have claimed that

the extreme violence of a film like *Texas Chainsaw Massacre* may help to inspire the tremendous amount of violence we have in our society. Do you think that's true?

Craven: I don't think a movie inspires violence any more than a flash of sunlight in a windshield might cause someone to flip out. I think it's the nature of our society that produces such violence—the overcrowding and pressure that causes some people to crack. If anything, these films offer a pressure release, the same way a nightmare operates physiologically: they take you into a space that in your normal, rational state, you would not take yourself. They seem to have some therapeutic function. Also, you have to remember, people were assassinating presidents long before television and movies. John Wilkes Booth didn't see *Texas Chainsaw Massacre*.

TZ: One final question. Is there anything that frightens Wes Craven?

Craven: Yes. My shooting schedule. **17**

"If you are seriously interested in science fiction, this is a 'must have' book." — Gene Roddenberry

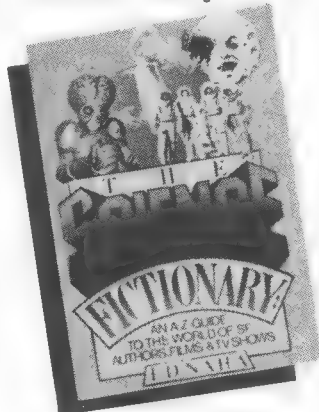
Scifi fans: if you were to buy only one book on your hobby, this is the one. It's definitive — the one reference a buff *must* have. From A to Z — from *Abbott & Costello Go to Mars* to *Zontar: The Thing from Venus* — here are over 1,000 detailed entries on the best (and worst) in SF movies, TV, authors, publications, organizations and awards.

The superman who gives you this FUN reference book is *Starlog* and *Future Life* ex-editor Ed Naha. Ed assembles:

□ 999 films — major players, credits, plots (summarized with exquisite drollery), production company, running time, and whether in b/w or color
□ 292 TV shows: series, specials, made-for-TV movies, kidvid, even pilots that never got on the air — from nearly four decades. Data include principal players, credits, plots, year(s), b/w or color
□ 204 SF authors: profiles, birth/death dates, major works, knowing comments on their styles
□ Nearly 200 great photos
□ SF awards — Hugo and Nebula
□ Oscars in Space: scifi Academy Award winners
□ Data on scifi magazines and organizations — are you missing out on any?
□ Theme and Theme Again: or, the plots and subjects that get used over and over
□ 400 big 6 1/2 x 9 1/4

SAVE \$15
Yours for
only \$1.95

When you join the
Movie/Entertainment
Book Club and agree to buy
4 or more books over the
next 2 years



pages □ **FUN Extra!** The Best in Scifi Quotes: snippets of unforgettable (and very forgettable) dialogue from genre heavies — sometimes insightful, sometimes hilarious.

Hurry, before our copies are devoured by the Empire of the Ants.

TZ-1

MOVIE/ENTERTAINMENT BOOK CLUB 15 Oakland Avenue • Harrison, N.Y. 10528

I enclose \$1.95. Please send me the \$16.95 *Science Fictionary* by Ed Naha postpaid and at no additional charge. At the same time, please accept my membership in the Movie/Entertainment Book Club. I agree to buy 4 books over the next 2 years at regular Club prices, plus shipping and handling. I will be offered at least 200 books on movies and entertainment, usually at 20-33% discounts plus shipping and handling. For every book I buy at the regular price, I receive one or more FREE Bonus Book Certificates which entitle me to buy many books at far below regular Club price, usually at 60-80% discounts. I'll be offered a new Club Selection plus Alternates every 4 weeks (13 times a year) in the Club bulletin, PREVIEWS. If I want the Selection, I will do nothing and it will come automatically. If I want an Alternate or no book at all, I'll notify you by the deadline date specified. If I should ever receive a Selection without having had 10 days to decide if I want it, I may return it at Club expense and receive full credit. PREVIEWS also includes news about my fellow members and their hobbies. I am welcome to send in similar items about myself and my interests. PREVIEWS will publish every such item it deems suitable, FREE.

Name (please print) _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____



Swamp Thing

A PRODUCER WHO LOVES COMICS AND A DIRECTOR WHO LOVES HORROR JOIN FORCES IN THE SOUTH CAROLINA BAYOU TO BRING A COMIC-BOOK HERO TO LIFE. JIM VERNIERE COVERS THE EXPERIMENT.

In 1782, in his essay, "What Is an American?" the French immigrant Michel Guillaume Jean de Crèvecoeur warned of America's "back settlers" who, "remote from the power of example and check of shame ... exhibit the most hideous parts of our society." He spoke of weird families who "recede still farther" into the great woods where the socializing influence of civilization cannot reach them, and added, ominously, that "there is something in the proximity of the woods which is very singular." Implicit in Crèvecoeur's description was that these barbaric "back settlers" practiced society's twin taboos, cannibalism and incest. Thus, he became the first transplanted European to record a distinctly American phenomenon, one that has become a common motif in our mythology: the weird family. In a single recurring image, the weird family embodies our fear of what lies beyond the tree line, beyond the darkness at the edge of town.

In our folklore, these savage people are often depicted as attacking wayward travelers. We have seen their kind in films such as John Boorman's *Deliverance* and Walter Hill's *Southern Comfort*. And if one takes into account the dwindling of the American wilderness since the eighteenth century, then it becomes clear that even such genre classics as Alfred Hitchcock's *Psycho* and Tobe Hooper's *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre* partake of the weird-family motif.

But no film is so clearly inspired by the same vision

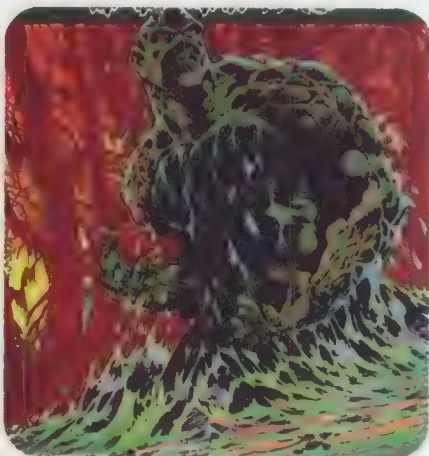
that haunted Crèvecoeur as Wes Craven's *The Hills Have Eyes*, a virtually unheralded depiction of a battle to the death between two American families, one a middle-class family with a retired policeman as its patriarch, the other a frightening collection of freaks headed by a horribly scarred psychotic named Jupiter. It is the typical American family versus a commune of horror, and it culminates in a bloodbath on the weird family's home turf. Clearly, in *The Hills Have Eyes*, Craven says that once you step beyond the boundaries of society, you expose yourself to sociopathic forces: the freaks, psychos, religious fanatics, and swamp-dwellers who inhabit the wilderness of America's collective unconscious.

Wes Craven—is there a horror film director with a more appropriate name?—is probably better known for his first film, *The Last House on the Left*, about some demented hippies who rape, mutilate, and murder two innocent teenage girls. The film contained a level of violence that had never been seen before, and it preceded the excesses of later "body count" films like *Dawn of the Dead* and *Friday the 13th*. Indeed, *The Last House on the Left* almost received an X rating for its gruesome violence; there is a disemboweling scene that sent some viewers running from the theaters. "I wanted to say something about violence and about American movies that mislead us by telling us how easy it is to kill someone," said Craven in a recent interview.

"Don't forget, I made that picture during the Vietnam era, when people were watching villages being burned while they ate their evening meals."

Craven's third feature film, *Deadly Blessing*, was as cautionary in theme as his first two, although in *Deadly Blessing* there were no disembowelings and no human torches. Craven had apparently abandoned, for the time being, the visceral brutality that marked his early work in favor of a more psychological approach. *Deadly Blessing* was a sophisticated thriller about the horrors of repressed sexuality and moral superiority. Set in the Amish country of rural Pennsylvania, it concerned three young women terrorized by a cult of religious zealots called the Hittites. Craven's portrait of the demonic underside of religious fanaticism was especially revealing in light of his own strict religious background. Like that other child of religious orthodoxy, Paul Schrader (*Taxi Driver*, *Hard Core*, *The Cat People*), Craven seemed obsessed by cathartic doses of sex and violence, almost as if he could purge himself of his fundamentalist upbringing by exposing his hidden fears and desires to the light.

Craven's latest project, slated for a spring release by Avco Embassy, is a film adaptation of the DC Comics' series *Swamp Thing*, which was created in 1972 by writer Len Wein and artist Berni Wrightson. Wrightson, best known for his illustrations of the stories of Edgar Allan Poe, Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*, and countless *Creepy*, *Eerie*, and *Heavy Metal* covers, is one of fantasy's most popular illustrators, along with names like Frank Frazetta and Richard Corben. Born in 1948 in Baltimore, Wrightson began work as a staff artist on DC Comics' *House of Mystery* and *Tales of the Unexpected*. *Swamp Thing*, which he drew for ten issues, was his best work in the comic book field. Wes Craven's screen adaptation—described by filmmakers as a variation on the "Beauty and the Beast" theme—will be a PG-rated effort aimed squarely at the mass market. The question is: How much Craven will a family-oriented film based on a comic book be able to take?



Created in 1971, by artist Berni Wrightson and writer Len Wein, *Swamp Thing* soon enjoyed a cult following among comic book fans.



The film version, shot outside Charleston, features Ray Wise as Dr. Alec Holland and local actress Nanette Brown as his sister Linda. Here they test an experimental growth formula, watched by Adrienne Barbeau as Alice Cable, a government security agent.



Louis Jourdan plays the suave villain Arcane, Holland's wealthy, unscrupulous rival. When his attempt to wrest the formula from Holland leads to an explosion, Arcane slips from the burning lab with an armload of notes.



Stuntman-actor Dick Durock makes a pensive-looking Swamp Thing, Holland's new form after the lab accident.

Although the weird family on the edge of town is still in evidence, that aspect of Craven's vision is subordinate to a Jekyll-Hyde plot device. The film's protagonist is a researcher named Dr. Alec Holland (Ray Wise) who works with his sister Linda (Nanette Brown) in a lab in the South Carolina swamps. The two are attempting to synthesize a plant growth hormone in the hope of ending world starvation. But a demonic figure named Arcane (Louis Jourdan) lusts after their formula for his own evil design. During a fight with Arcane, Holland accidentally spills the volatile solution on himself. He bursts into flames and goes running into the swamp, where he metamorphoses into a horrifying half-man half-vegetable creature: the Swamp Thing.

The film's development is an interesting lesson in the power of popular culture. The character known as Swamp Thing first made his misshapen appearance in a comic series (as did Superman, Batman, and the Hulk), a series that became a cult item among comic aficionados because it featured the perfect existentialist hero: a man transformed into a hideously deformed creature condemned to wander through miasmal swamps, trying to retain some vestige of his human identity even as he's being absorbed by his vegetable self. This is the alienated man, cut off from human contact by his horrible appearance, doomed to wander forever in the slough of despond. The appeal of *Swamp Thing* to readers of comic books, who are generally preteenagers, adolescents, and college students, is therefore obvious. Here is a character with whom they can identify, a noble, misunderstood monster, an angelic mind trapped within bestial flesh. The most sublime recent incarnation of this figure can be seen in David Lynch's *The Elephant Man*, the most pedestrian in television's *The Hulk*.

Encouraged by the success of comic-book adaptations in the past, producers Benjamin Melniker, a former MGM vice president, and Michael Uslan, a twenty-nine-year-old lawyer for United Artists, formed Swampfilms, Inc., and set out to make themselves a movie. Uslan's involvement in the project goes beyond the ordinary role of producer, however. It is more like the culmination of a lifelong love affair with comics. As a boy, Uslan—who describes himself as “one of the



Another transformation occurs when Arcane tests the formula on his luckless henchman Bruno, turning him into a rodentlike thing four feet tall.



Cable is kidnapped—and almost drowned—by Ferret (David Hess), chief of Arcane's commandos.



In a rescue attempt, the transformed Holland faces the commandos' guns and finds they have little effect.



Director Wes Craven in one of the three swamps used for location shooting. Crew members often resorted to snake boots, waders, pith helmets, and mosquito netting to ward off local fauna — everything from ticks to alligators.



Menacing beasts both large and small also made an appearance in Craven's previous film, *Deadly Blessing*. Here Sharon Stone finds herself in the clutches of a particularly nasty nightmare



and Maren Jensen succumbs to the nastiest beast of all.

original comic-book fans"—amassed more than twenty-five thousand comic books, a collection he later methodically sold off to finance his law school career.

In 1971, Uslan taught (and still teaches by correspondence) the first fully accredited college course in comics, entitled "The Comic Book in America," at Indiana University, and he is in constant demand on the college lecture circuit as an expert in comic lore.

Not content with critical expertise, Uslan also has practical experience as a comic book writer. He has written stories for the *Batman* and *Shadow* series, and has even adapted a sword-and-sorcery series for DC Comics based on the epic poem *Beowulf*. Together with *Swamp Thing* coproducer Benjamin Melniker, Uslan plans next to adapt a full-length *Batman* to the screen. In a sense, then, *Swamp Thing* will test the waters for future adaptations of comic-book tales.

Inevitably, in such genre films, the metamorphosis scenes become the greatest selling point (as in Joe Dante's *The Howling* and John Landis's *An American Werewolf in London*). There will be several such scenes in *Swamp Thing*, including the one in which Alec Holland is transformed into the eponymous creature and one in which Arcane is transformed into a boar-like abomination.

On a recent visit to the *Swamp Thing* set in Charleston, South Carolina, we talked to special effects and makeup man Bill Munns, who had strong feelings on the latex-versus-foam controversy and on the corrosive effects of acidic swamp water on his monster suits. His workshop-on-wheels, a refitted mobile home, was dark and cluttered inside, but when we grew accustomed to the light, we could see that the place was littered with models and masks that had been tossed aside and underfoot. With all those faces strewn about, it looked like a plastic surgeon's nightmare.

When we returned to the set, Craven was shooting the scene in which Holland has his accident, a shot which called for Tony Cecere, a fire-stunt specialist (\$1,200 to \$1,500 for full body burn). Cecere's specialty is a fire stunt without protective clothing. Instead, he wears only the character's costume and a coating of something he called "fire gel," the prime ingredient of which is cactus sap. (The glowing "growth hormone" that spills on Holland was actually the liquid from inside a pack of American Cyanamid Lightsticks.) The stunt was very impressive, but stunts and latex suits do not make hit movies.

It will be interesting to see how *Swamp Thing* finally fits into the Craven oeuvre, for although he has written his own screenplay, he has followed the characterizations and story lines of Wein and Wrightson. Some changes have clearly been made for the sake of mass appeal: Alec Holland's wife in the comic book becomes his sister in the film, and the character Cable, a government agent, though male in the comic, is, in the movie, played by Adrienne Barbeau.

One thing's for sure: the marketing value of *Swamp Thing* will make it Craven's most commercially viable film, and its success or failure will give studios a clear picture of the public's interest in relatively obscure comic-book heroes. **17**

The Gargoyles of Gotham

Photographs by Don Hamerman

Text by Stephen DiLauro



HIDDEN LIKE ENDANGERED SPECIES AMID THE STEEL-AND-GLASS SKYLINE,
A MENAGERIE OF GRAND AND GROTESQUE CREATURES
STARE INSCRUTABLY AT MODERN-DAY NEW YORK.

Since the beginning of this century, skyscrapers and other steel-frame buildings have gone up at a surprising pace. These structures are built to withstand the stresses and strains of the elements, as well as human impositions. Battering winds, rumbling subways, heavy traffic, and occasional flooding do little to subvert the intention of the designers: to build shelters that will defy nature and continue to stand.

Why, then, should a trained architect, skilled in mathematics and building construction, adorn the facade of his creation with a brace of gargoyles? Are these stone monsters arising from his subconscious desires to worship the irrational, after his daily travail in the realm of rational geometrics? Perhaps.

But history supplies reasons of its own. Scholars have postulated that as Christianity moved northward in Europe during the Dark Ages, missionaries encountered pagan worshippers of Pan. A need arose, therefore, to decorate the newly built churches with

symbols which would convince the new believers that their old gods were afraid to enter, for many of these churches were built upon what had originally been pagan gathering places. Scholars believe that the story of St. George slaying the dragon is an allegory of how Christianity destroyed this literally Pan-theistic religion.

But upon a close examination of other cultures, this theory fails to convince. Consider the vast and fantastic bestiary that adorns Buddhist and Hindu temples throughout the Far East, or the totem poles of the Northwest Coast Indians on this continent. Here there are no warring religions, no rival gods. Is it not more likely that some primal urge, born of the collective unconscious, lies behind the impulse to adorn a building with monsters?

Whatever the answer, the gargoyles on the island of Manhattan clearly find their sculptural roots in the church tradition of Western Europe. With the rise of Gothic

architecture—responsible for cathedrals such as Notre Dame and Chartres—unknown artisans found themselves carving gargoyles which served a purpose beyond the warding off of evil. The mouths of the gargoyles had become rainspouts, spewing water away from the buttresses and cornices where others stood guard.

Yet Gothic rainspouts have long since been replaced by modern drainage techniques. Gargoyles remain—to what end we can only venture a guess.

The poet William Blake once wrote, "If thou seest an eagle, thou seest a portion of genius. Look up, look up!" While there are no eagles flying over Gotham these days, we do urge you to look up as you walk its streets and avenues. Whether you stroll beneath a skyscraper, a tenement, or a brownstone, you may well spy a gargoyle staring down at you, like the faint pulse of some common unrecorded heritage, something which once throbbed at the very heart of nature.





Eighteenth Street and Irving Place
(left): A stone bird this grotesque might mislead archaeologists of the future. With its iconlike somnolence, it might easily be mistaken, thousands of years hence, for a charm or talisman.



Same location (left):

A hideous little beastie ravaged by time and the elements helps, symbolically, to keep an apartment building from tumbling down. The combination of fox and feline is an archetypal mix with roots in the folktales of Eastern Europe.

Right: Counterpart to the figure opposite, this ugly little troll bears his burden on the same building. Perhaps he is meant to embody the spirit of the stone, unhappy at being wedged and cemented together.

The Gargoyles of Gotham



Grace Church, Broadway and Tenth Street (above): From the legend of St. George slaying the dragon—which some scholars have posited to be an allegory for the overpowering of the early European magic cults by Christianity—to the popular folk song “Puff, the Magic Dragon,” basilisks have fascinated mankind. This sturdy example of the mythic fire-breathing beast adorns a neo-Gothic church, and is modeled after gargoyles found on such European cathedrals as Notre Dame in Paris.

Murry Hill (right): This caprine devil lives on a building whose cornerstone was laid on January 17, 1923, when Capricorn reigned. Was the architect also an astrologer?





West Village (above): Satyr? Faun?
Possibly a god of the winds?
Whatever the case, this pagan figure clearly derives its power from its massive horns. Amidst the hustling bustle of city life, it stands as a paean to nature at its fullest and most potent.

Grand Central Station (right):
These geometric rats, huddled above the station's Lexington Avenue entrance through the Graybar Building, are a whimsical reminder to travelers that, not so long ago, disease-carrying rodents were able to make their way around the world by ship. The metal cones, like those of ocean liners, make sure that *these* creatures, at least, will never gain admittance to the station.





Chrysler Building, Forty-Second Street and Lexington Avenue (left): In the 1920s and '30s the Art Deco movement brought to architecture a burgeoning fascination with things machined. Smooth, sleek lines were the fashion, and no monument made more use of these than the Chrysler Building, designed by William Van Alen and completed in 1930. Facing northwest, this eagle keeps watch over the city from the building's fifty-ninth floor (while one of his seven counterparts keeps an eye on the *Twilight Zone* offices just up the street).



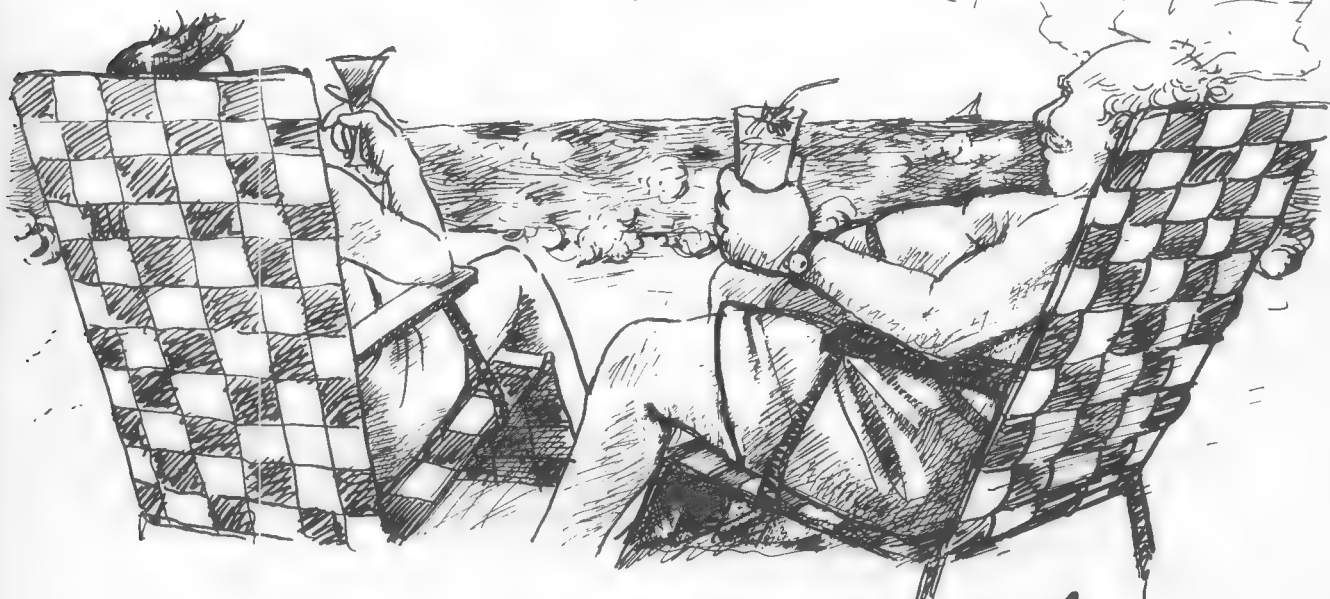
Jane Street (right): This leafy face is no West Village wood-sprite, but rather some godlike fantasy that seems to bellow with the combined voices of the trees cut down to build the house's interior. Superstition tends to force its way into art; here tribal myth has leapt into the twentieth century, resisting abstraction.

Eastern Parkway, Brooklyn, near Washington Avenue (below): The face of this St. Mark's lion expresses the unalloyed joy the anonymous stonecutter took in making a sculptural statement. The artisans who created this and other

gargoyles speak to us still. The figures which articulate our cityscape may today be totems without myth, but they speak directly to the tribal spirit that lingers in us all. 17



Holiday



by Richard Christian Matheson

ONE OF THE NICEST THINGS ABOUT VACATIONING ALONE IS THAT YOU MEET THE MOST UNEXPECTED PEOPLE!

It was sunset. The inn was settling into night and vacationers wandered up from the beach, tired and sunburned. It was very hot in Bermuda—like a desert with an azure sea seeping from one side.

The waiter brought my drink and I rested my feet on the patio wall overlooking the ocean. As the sea churned easily, wearily from its day, a man sat down next to me. His hair was white and there wasn't much of it. His skin was fair, almost pink, cheeks sunburned and high. About sixty to seventy, I figured.

"Mind?" he asked, half-finished drink in hand.

"I could use the company." He seemed harmless enough.

He settled down into the chaise, and together we watched the waves spreading over the sand and retreating. Birds with long, thin legs sprinted awkwardly over the sand and eventually lifted skyward.

"Flyin's a hell of a thing," he observed, after

a long sip.

"I can't do it," I agreed, and he smiled.

"Where you from?" he asked, eyes sizing me.

"Los Angeles. Just down for some sun and free time." A waiter in penguin-proper sidled over and the man ordered us another round.

"My treat," he offered. "Makes me feel good."

I nodded thanks as he winked paternally.

"What's your name?" he asked, taking another swallow.

"Karl," I answered, ready for trouble. The way I saw it, paternal winkers always made trouble for you one way or another.

"Pretty nice," he appraised its sound, "Karl ... yeah, pretty damn nice."

"Thanks," I said, growing less than fascinated with the exchange. I decided not to ask his name, why wave the red cape.

"Say, Karl, do you mind if I ask you a personal question?"

No objection, so he went ahead.

"What did you get for Christmas last year?"

I swallowed a mouthful of ice after crushing it to bits.

"What?" I was starting to feel the liquor.

"For Christmas ... what did you get?"

"You serious?" He was looking a bit sloshy himself, wiping his mouth with one hand, thoughtfully, drunkenly.

He gestured away my stinginess and I nodded unenthusiastically.

"Power saw from the wife, shirts and a record from the kids, binoculars from the folks, and a wine-making kit from the people in my department." I tinkled the ice around in my glass. "Oh, and this magazine I subscribe to, *Realtor's Life*, sent me a barometer with an escrow chart. Helps you figure percentages."

The other round arrived and he paid the waiter. Tipped him good.

He sighed as he mumbled through my recitation of gifts. "What was the record?" he asked.

"Music from *Hatari*. Horrible stuff. Oboes imitating rhinos, you know?"

He nodded and swallowed half his new drink with a liquidy gobble. We didn't say anything else for a few minutes. Some of the inn workers came by, and lit the tiki torches and we watched them. Bugs were flying around, drawn to the flow. We swatted one or two.

"I love it down here," he said, voice blurry. "Just wish the hell I had the time to get away more often."

He looked at me with bloodshot eyes. "But in distribution ... who has time to vacation?"

How the hell did I know? I sold condos and houses and made deals for closing costs and termite inspections. Dullest stuff in the world. Distribution was for pamphlets dropped from helicopters, as far as I could tell.

"Yeah," I answered, being polite. Why get a paternal winker mad if it could be avoided.

The sea was glowing from a butter-colored moon, and the man shifted in the chaise.

"How'd you like the power saw?" he asked.

"Not bad. Blades were pot metal, though. Break like icicles." Nosy guy.

"Yeah, I know the one." He reached a hand out to mine. We were both woozy. "I like you," he said. Drunks always said that, in my experience.

"I like you, too," I said. "But I didn't catch the name." When they stick their hands out, you have to ask.

He winked at me as our hands met, under that butter-moon.

"Santa," he whispered, leaning in close, breath like a scythe.

I looked at him with a half-smile.

"Beg your pardon?"

"Santa," he repeated, nodding happily.

"As in Claus?"

"Well, of course. What else?"

I tried to not look any different. Why upset him?

"Sorry," I said.

He pulled back and yawned.

"Yeah, well ... anyhow, I'll be leaving first thing in the morning. Have to get back to my place up north. Me and the wife have tons of work." He laughed a little; a tiny, drunken, aren't-things-ironic laugh. "Christ, it's already bloody May. Practically no time to do anything. Glad we had a chance to shoot the breeze, though."

He stretched and yawned again, spilling some of his drink onto the patio where just he and I sat, the warm breezes blowing.

"Oh," I said, watching him from the corner of my eye. *The insane look different*, my father once told me. *Just look closely and you can see it.*

"Anyhow, you have a nice trip back to ..."

"Los Angeles," I reminded him, finishing off my drink.

"Right," he nodded. "Say, care for another drink? I can have the waiter get you another ... just say the word."

I declined the offer. Don't get indebted to nuts. Another piece of advice. That one from my mother.

He turned to go.

"Hey, by the way, Karl ..."

Yes, Santa? I couldn't bring the words to my mouth.

"Yes?" I said.

"Sorry about all that junk you got. I just can't seem to get those little bastards of mine to turn out any decent work. But I'll try and drop off something this year you'll like."

I must have smirked.

"Need an address?" I asked. I was smirking for sure.

He stopped dead in his tracks, looking very hurt.

"Address? You putting me on?" His eyes were still twinkling, but they looked a little miffed. "I'm Santa Claus. I know where you live."

He stared at me and I stared back. Hard to know what to say at a moment like that.

"Tell me something," I said, "How come when I was eight, you didn't bring me that autographed picture of Joe DiMaggio I asked for? I wrote to you and everything."

He looked uncomfortable. "Well, sometimes it doesn't go the way I'd like," he managed, looking

**"Shave the beard off
when I come down here.
Only way to get
any decent sun.
But I get a burn
every damn time."**

away in what seemed like troubled thought.

"Oh," I said, "Sorry. Didn't mean to put you on the spot."

He nodded, seeming to accept the apology, though obviously put off. I suddenly felt awful.

"Forget it," he said quietly. "It's not your fault. I probably shouldn't be so candid about things."

His voice sounded vulnerable and a little sad.

"The wife keeps telling me to keep my big mouth closed. People just don't like to hear about what I do for a living." He shrugged. "Scares them or something ... I don't completely understand it myself."

I looked into his moist, open eyes.

"How come no beard?" I asked.

He rubbed at his cheeks with a rough hand.

"Shave it off when I come down here. Only way to get any decent sun. But I get a burn every damn time."

As I watched him from the corner of my eye, he sighed and grabbed at his fat stomach, tucking his shirt in. "Gotta lose some weight ... you don't know any good diets do you? But no fad things ... something that'll work."

I shook my head no, feeling kind of sorry for him. Nuts, but sweet, I figured.

"Hey, sure you don't want to stay for another round?" I asked. No harm in *my* asking, I thought.

He smiled, glad we were getting along again.

"Nah ... I should get back and get some sleep. Leaving in the morning, Karl."

I stood up to see him off.

"Well, nice meeting you, Santa."

That time it felt good.

"Same here, Karl," he said. "And like I said before, don't worry about this year." He winked at me, "I'll see to it you get something really nice; something you'll like."

I looked at him and smiled. "Thanks."

"Don't stay out too late, Karl," he said, and in a couple of seconds he was gone, tottering back to his room.

Well, I sat out there until midnight and thought a lot about Santa. His twinkling eyes and his fat stomach and his thin silver hair.

He sure did look like Santa Claus.

But, I mean really, truthfully, honestly, what was I supposed to think?

The man was clearly on a permanent holiday

upstairs. No dial tone.

So, for another twenty minutes or so I watched the black Caribbean hissing over coral and finished off another drink.

Somehow, I finally made it back to my bungalow and thought for a little while in the dark. Sure, Santa Claus had looked like Santa Claus. But if looks were all it took, a lot of people could be a lot of people they weren't. The world would be crazy. Out of control.

And thinking sleepy thoughts along that line, I tilted and nodded off.

The following morning, as I checked out, I peered at the desk clerk, going about his prissy duties. I lifted my voice slightly as I observed him tabulating my bill.

"I was chatting with a gentleman last night. A Mr. Claus." Why explain the whole thing? Only be setting myself up, I figured.

But in a surprise turn, the clerk lit up, his mouth turning into a silly-looking O.

"Oh," he cooed, "I'm so glad you reminded me, sir. Mr. Claus left this morning ... " He turned and grabbed something from the mail slots as he continued chattering. "Flying north I believe he said."

Now there's a surprise, I thought.

Then he handed me something as he spun back, smiling all the while.

A manila envelope.

And so the plot thickened, I thought. I thanked him, paid the bill, and found myself a fat couch to sink into.

A few feet away, a wedding cake fountain ploinked as I unsealed the envelope. Maybe an apology, I thought. Although a wanted poster would have been more appropriate.

But as I slid what was inside all the way out, my heart smoked to a stop.

It was a picture of smiling Joe with a fat-ended slugger raised over one confident shoulder. And it was made out to me.

Clipped to it was a handwritten note:

Dear Karl,

Was up late last night and couldn't sleep. Really sorry about that Christmas. '39 was a bad year for me. The war was starting up, and my helpers' hearts just weren't in their work. The world wasn't in very good shape then, Karl, and I had my hands full. Hope this makes up for it. Have a Merry Christmas.

Your drinking pal, Santa

P.S. Maybe I'll see you around the 25th."

I'll be looking for you, I thought as I read the note, trembling like some delighted kid.

I'll be looking for you. 17

Top of the Stairs

by Stephen Schlich

IT WAS JUST AN OLD WOODEN STAIRCASE, TWENTY-EIGHT STEPS HIGH—
BUT IT LED TO THE UPPER REACHES OF HELL!

A broken board at the top of the stairs protested loudly as an anonymous foot put weight on it. It was that final step at floor level, rotted and weak and ready to toss some hapless stair climber to a mangled landing in the dim hallway below. Friends had learned to avoid it or use the elevator. If the elevator was working. At any rate, footsteps with a creak meant a stranger.

This inadvertent alarm was valuable to Walker's peace of mind, especially since the accident. Living in a wheelchair was hell after twenty-eight years on two good, sturdy legs, but it was a hell he lived nonetheless. The creak's absence always diminished the fear that built as unidentified footsteps climbed his stairs.

Except when Sandy forgot.

Tap ... tap ... tap ... Walker had been asleep, but the sound jerked him out of it instantly. He hoped that Sandy had forgotten the step, prayed that it was Sandy this time. He argued to himself that the sound had been cut short, as if she remembered, and pulled her foot up at the last moment. Yes, let it be Sandy. He didn't want to deal with a stranger today.

Tap ... tap ... tap ... Walker followed the footsteps in his mind's eye, measuring them against the spatial relationships of the apartment hallway. He was like a blind man who compensated with other senses: What Walker couldn't go see, he had learned to go hear.

Six paces from the top stair. A knock at the door—?



"Sandy? Is that you?"

Silence. There was no knock, no reply to his call. He tried to climb out of bed and was wrenched back to reality by the pain from his legs. *Damn it, why do I keep forgetting?* But he knew why: six weeks since the accident. Six eternal weeks in a goddamn wheelchair stacked against the memory of twenty-eight years of freedom ... no wonder he forgot!

A key turned in the lock and the door opened. Walker felt a wash of relief. Sandy had been digging for her keys and didn't hear him, that was all. No cause for alarm. The door closed.

"Sandy! Are you home?" *Dumb question.*

Silence again: No steps, no voice; only the wind's soft reply as it ruffled the curtains of his room. Walker felt the bottom drop out of his stomach. He held absolutely still for a full two



The Top of the Stairs

minutes, breathing through his nostrils and looking from the clock-radio's second hand to the bedroom door and back. The footsteps at the front door and their maker, now on his side of it, remained still.

"Damnit, who's out there? Tell me or I'm calling the police! Sandy, is this some kind of a joke? It's not funny!"

Walker leaned over, ignoring the hot stabs of pain from his legs, and pulled the phone onto the bed. After a click, the dial tone droned reassuringly. He put the receiver down. Not yet, I'm still okay, right?

The footsteps began again. They were hesitant, as if the owner were thinking on her feet. *Her* feet, Walker prayed that those footsteps were *hers*. They went into the kitchen and the sounds were all familiar: refrigerator, sink, cabinets. They were sounds that Sandy would make.

"Sandy, damn you, answer me! It's Carl. Say something!"

She might be giving him the silent treatment. It had happened before. Sandy knew how cruel silence was to him, she had known that long before his injury. And for all her sophistication, she could be very cruel.

He felt his temper rising and thought briefly, *a cripple can't use a temper, who listens?* It didn't slow the blow-up; nothing ever did. He beat his fist on the headboard and threw the phone to the floor.

"Sandy! You answer me this minute! I need some help!"

The kitchen sounds continued. Walker dragged his legs to the wheelchair side of his bed. He rested before the final assault, waiting for the shooting pains to back down a little. They didn't back down much. He finally steeled himself and hauled his torso into the chair, seat first.

As he backed away from the bed, his heels fell off and banged against the metal restraints of the foot stirrups. Agony squirted his brain full of angry red ink; the world came back in slow sheets of throbbing reality.

But he sat in the chair now, mobile.

He wheeled angrily into the living room, because he didn't want to consider the implications if the footsteps were not Sandy's. The throbbing in his legs beat a clumsy, hideous rhythm to his pain center.

It was Sandy. Yes. She sat at the kitchen table with a thin sandwich and glass of skim milk and scanned an issue of *Cosmo* while she ate. She looked pale in a black leotard and jeans. Her straight brown hair framed her face limply; a provocative smile moistened her lips. She didn't look up.

"Talk to me, you bitch!"

He got no reaction. She didn't flinch, didn't

blink, didn't nod, or acknowledge that he existed at all. He felt desperation slither across his psyche.

"Sandra, don't do this! Or at least tell me why. Whatever I did, I didn't mean it. Not really. You know me. I lost my temper or something. Look, I'm sorry, okay? Talk to me, please!"

She pushed *Cosmo* aside and laughed into the air. She mesmerized him; she had a certain texture that drove him wild. He couldn't stay mad at her. She was beautiful. Her uneven chin, small chest and big ass weren't attractive in themselves. But Walker could have cared less. She used what she had effectively. Most effectively.

She drew men like garbage draws flies.

And that carried his anger full circle. He cursed the intense, sensual smile that had drawn him to her and, to his dismay, drew everyone else as well. It was the symbol of her virtue and her promiscuity, the unstable Mobius around which he loved/hated her.

She made it easy to hate her today. She carried the sandwich tray and the milk glass to the sink, and passed him on her way to the bathroom without so much as a glance. Walker heard the cabinet, the hairbrush, the toilet. She was going out!

"What're you doing in there? Where do you think you're going? I'm your husband, Sandy. I have a right to know!"

Her hairbrush clattered to the floor and he thought for a moment that she would come out for a confrontation. But then the shower spat loudly and he knew that she still ignored him. He sat in his wheelchair and boiled.

She went out on him; he knew that. He could even accept it, now. But she'd done it all along! Before the accident he had ripped into a frenzy when he found out, but things had been different then. He hadn't been a cripple then. She didn't flaunt it to him then—he'd have killed her. *Funny thought.*

Sandy came out of the bathroom nude and slipped past Walker into the bedroom. He wheeled to the doorway where he could see her.

"I'll block your way until you tell me where you're going. You'll have to go through me to get out of here!" He could have been talking to the wall.

She pulled on clean jeans—no underwear—and tied a crepe blouse around her waist so that it opened all the way down the front. A loosely knotted scarf garnished her neck. Walker recognized the outfit: her cruising uniform. What she wore when she planned to take it off later. He'd done the peeling enough times himself, before they were married.

She came out of the bedroom fast and he rolled backward furiously to keep himself between

her and the door. Instead, she went for the phone. He realized that it must have been ringing. Why hadn't he heard it?

"Carl?"

Walker jumped at his own name and then realized she was talking to the phone. Somewhere beneath his anger, part of his mind wondered why she would expect his call when he was right there in front of her.

"Oh, David!" She was relieved. "You gave me a start. I thought Carl had come home early."

David! David, that mealy-mouthed hairdresser who spent too many afternoons helping Sandy priss in front of a mirror. Walker knew the little bastard was hot to make his wife, but he hadn't realized that she wanted him, too.

"No, don't worry. He won't be home until tomorrow noon. Yes, I'm sure. We've got the whole evening to ourselves!"

She shifted her weight from one foot to the other and pulled the phone cord down between her breasts. The conversation descended into giggles and non sequiturs. Walker felt enveloped in a cloud of confusion. *Won't be home until tomorrow? Wait a minute ...*

He felt the old, deep anger welling up again. He was sweating. *You lousy slut! You'd do it right in front of me, wouldn't you? You say I don't give you any real love, and then you run to that shit of a hairdresser. I ought to kill you! I ought to—*

The world moved in a vertigo of stop action:

The door burst open. Walker hadn't even heard the footsteps. He hadn't blocked the door. He sat frozen in his chair as the pain of memory bit into him.

The man who came through the door tore the phone from Sandy's hands, listened to David for a second, and jerked him out of the wall, all in a breath. He tugged her savagely by her scarf while he kicked and punched her.

"Go out on me again, you bitch! I'll teach you to go out on me!"

Walker's mouth lay open. The man was *him!*

The Walker-with-legs twisted Sandy's scarf tighter around her neck and beat away her attempts to hit back. He'd cut off her wind. She couldn't scream. Her lips twisted and became dotted with spittle as she gasped for air. He dragged her into the hallway.

Walker-the-cripple watched the scene in sullen silence. He hadn't meant to hurt her so badly. After a rotten aborted failure of a business trip, he had come home to find *this*. His temper got the best of him, what else? Scare her, that's all he'd wanted to do. Rough her up a bit. He wheeled to the doorway to watch.

Walker-with-legs pulled her head over the railing with his throat grip. She flailed at him, pushed off

the railing, and tumbled them both to the floor. She kicked and punched but couldn't break his grip. He still controlled her air. He hauled her up by the scarf, they stumbled in front of the stairs—

And it gave way. The top step *cre-e-eaked* for the last time ever, and it took an eternity because it sucked her ankle down into it as it collapsed and both of them, *ohnogod*, both of them plunged into the darkness below.

Walker-the-cripple closed his eyes as the bodies crunched and cracked down the twenty-eight stairs to the next floor. One stair for each year of his life. He hadn't wanted to kill her, not kill her...

Sandy's death had been ruled accidental. She was in the ground before he regained consciousness, and no one looked at her twisted, broken neck closely enough to notice strangulation marks. He was lucky, they told him. She cushioned his landing. He was crippled but alive.

Lucky!

Walker-the-cripple's head dropped to his hands. Tears wet his fingers, not for his dead Sandy but for his own dead legs. Never to walk again, never to know the exhaustion—and exhilaration—of a stairway. She was better off, peacefully dead in some painless world.

He knew that was a lie. He knew that he would cling to life the way he clung to his pillow when the pain got bad. He knew that he would gulp his Darvons and try to move his legs because every second of his life was one more than that slut Sandy would ever enjoy.

He became aware of movement.

The chair had been parked at the door's threshold. Now, somehow it had slipped over. He was rolling unchecked toward the top of the stairs. It was a straight shot with no obstacles that ended in a screaming plummet to the floor below!

The brakes! Find the brakes!

He found them. They were jammed open, solid as rocks. He pulled at them desperately. The tongue-and-groove floorboards squeaked under his wheels as he rolled toward the stairway's mouth. His fingers chafed against the wheels. The hard rubber and steel drew blood. Yet the chair did not slow down.

He twisted in his seat. Sandy's face cackled behind him, a grotesque mask of bleeding cuts and fractured bones. Her twisted hands gripped the back of the wheelchair and pushed it the last few feet to the stairs.

The last thing he saw before he went over was the repaired top step, the brand-new board that could not possibly have creaked since its predecessor had cost him his legs six weeks before.

He closed his eyes and waited for the impact. **17**



The Voices of the Dead

by Leslie Horvitz

HOW COULD SHE HAVE KNOWN, ON THAT NIGHT IN THE CEMETERY,
THAT A MESSAGE FROM BEYOND THE GRAVE
WOULD BRING SO STRANGE AN ANSWER FROM THE LIVING?

Tillie Hardin, like many other women her age, was occasionally inclined to seek out the advice of gypsy fortune-tellers who sat in Greenwich Village storefront windows. And though she knew better than to ask the men she met which signs they'd been born under, she found that she could not rest—if the men interested her at all—until she learned what constellations governed their lives.

Tillie was slender and attractive, with hair that hadn't decided whether it wanted to be auburn or red; but there was no doubt about her eyes, which were brown and intense, as though she'd been staring too hard and too long at some faraway object no one else could see.

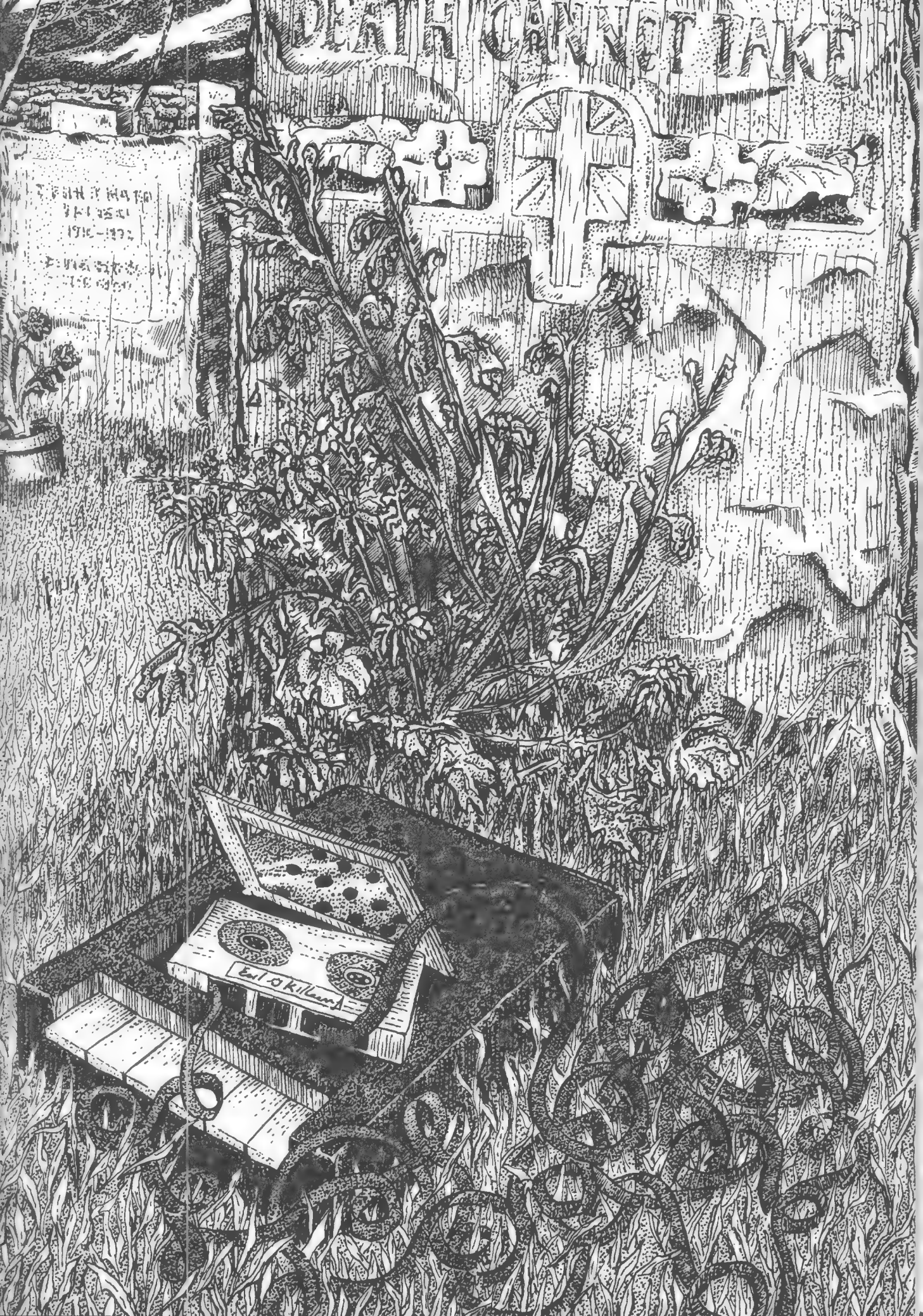
No luckier than thousands of other ambitious women migrating into New York, Tillie had had to endure the vicissitudes that characterized an aspiring actress's life. Inevitably she had earned what living she could as a waitress, but she never lasted long; she was forever enraging her employers, making it impossible for them not to fire her, and frequently fell into heated arguments with male customers who thought she was another item on the menu.

Acting, too—despite a certain modest success—proved frustrating; there was no way in the world she could live on four thousand dollars a

year in a city like New York, and she held out little hope that she would ever make more pursuing a stage career. She decided instead to try her hand at writing. She had kept a journal since she was eight and considered herself reasonably talented. Not that she had any desire to get away from the theater; she was just going to switch focus, that's all. She began to write a play, something simple and concise to begin with.

Every Wednesday evening she and half a dozen other women gathered at a studio on West Forty-Fourth Street to read their works in progress, hoping, of course, to be praised; hoping, if praise was not forthcoming, that they could bear criticism without being plunged into suicidal despair. Because this particular workshop was under the supervision of an established playwright, there was always the outside chance that one of the plays would actually be performed before a paying audience. But this possibility was not as good as they seemed to think; the playwright, despite his reputation, had problems getting his own work produced.

It was after one of these Wednesday evening sessions, around ten, that Tillie ran right into Max. She hadn't seen him for five years, wasn't even sure he was still in town; but obviously he was. He had not spotted her yet; he was across the street,



The Voices of the Dead

walking past Shubert Alley.

Suppressing an urge to escape, Tillie waited until he came closer. He was alone. That seemed very odd to her, because Max was not the sort of man she ever thought of as being alone; in her mind she envisioned him always with a beautiful woman (sometimes herself, sometimes not), or at least with a small entourage of admirers who would laugh at all his bad jokes and tell him how fine his performance had been. But there he was, of an autumn night, alone and with no particular urgency to his step.

Fate, she considered. Fate.

"Max," she said quietly, "Max, hello."

"Tillie!" he said. There was surprise in his voice, and wonder too. She rejoiced. "Tillie, is that you? What are you doing here?"

"Never mind, Max." She hurried up to him, suddenly aware of how very sweet the air was, how benign, auguring summer more than approaching winter. It seemed to her perfectly natural to kiss him: a quick but determined kiss that raised memories, in her mind, of more lingering kisses in the past.

Max was tall, lean, but strong, confident of his body—as, in fact, he should have been, for he was an actor, and quite a successful one. When Max's name was brought up in conversation, people didn't speak of auditions or residuals from commercial spots for Aqueduct Race Track; they talked Hollywood, they talked Broadway, they talked deals with ABC and Polygram. He had mobility—in his body, for he moved with the agility and daring of a trapeze artist, ever sure of his step—and in his face; in half a minute he could evince a spectrum of emotions: anger, sorrow, bewilderment, frustration, expectation, joy; an eyebrow arched could intimate ironic scorn, a drop of the lower lip despondency and fear. He was not handsome in any conventional sense, but because of this plasticity he seemed to be able to make himself as handsome as he wanted, contemptuous of the chromosomes that had determined his appearance. He was nearing forty; he was accustomed to lying about his age to people, but recognizing how much importance Tillie attached to the arrangement of the stars, to rising signs and moon signs, he'd finally come clean with her.

Success, even a considerable amount of it, had failed to make Max happy. He wanted more out of himself than he could possibly get. And the expectations he had of others were equally impossible to live up to—the sort of expectations more likely fulfilled in soap operas and in romantic comedies. He had seen a shrink, of course—everyone she knew had—but it had done little good. Max had had expectations of the shrink, too, and of what

he could derive from their sessions together, but these hopes had been dashed like all the others.

The fact was, Max could not compromise—which was what Tillie loved about him, and hated, too, and which was why, in the end, she had left him. A year at a time was all she could endure. Before that it had been eight months; before that, ten. They kept splitting up and coming back together and splitting up again; it was practically a ritual. The intervals between their times together were growing longer. But whatever the distance, physical or temporal, that intruded on their erratic, crazed relationship, Tillie believed absolutely that they were connected. Fate kept throwing them together.

Tillie hoped that Max had changed; doubted it, but hoped nonetheless. She ran scenarios through her mind of how it would be *this* time, even as the two of them stood there somewhat awkwardly. Not a minute had passed of this, their fourth reunion, and already the fantasies were reborn.

As though he were reading her mind, he said, almost imploringly, "I've changed. It may not look like I've changed, but I swear I have." His voice was as earnest as his expression. Tillie did not for a moment doubt his words. She wanted so much to believe him . . .

Max invited her for a drink. And how could she refuse? They found themselves at the far end of the bar at Sardi's, a convenient location and, given its connection to the stage, completely appropriate for their reunion. Within five minutes of their arrival the premises had become packed with throngs of theatergoers clutching *Playbills* in their hands, so exhilarated by the experience of attending a Broadway show that it was immaterial to them how good or bad it had been. Their excited chatter only made Tillie and Max feel more intimate; an empty bar could not have done the same. They believed themselves superior to all these philistines, believed themselves occupants of some rarefied place that the rest had no hope of ever entering.

Whatever emotional and psychological changes he might have gone through, Max looked no different from when she'd last seen him. He had only to touch her fingertips or talk to her in that quiet way he had to transport her back to when they'd first met, to when they'd first become lovers.

"I've learned," he said now. "I've learned a few things. I wasn't very good to you, was I?"

She laughed, throwing back her head. "There *were* those times . . ." she agreed. But the truth was that, in retrospect, they didn't seem all that bad.

"I could see why you walked out on me last time," he said.

**They were leaving Sardi's
when she asked
after Janis.**

"Fair's fair," she said.

**His face darkened;
he looked away from her.**

**"She died,"
he said simply.**

"Walked out on you? That was the time before last. Last time you walked out on *me*! I was miserable for months. Months? For years."

He was laughing, too, appreciative that she shared his enthusiasm. "I don't suppose it makes any difference at this point." He had a way of looking at her, a melancholy and passionate gaze that could cause her to forgive him, whatever the provocation. Any time he'd wanted, back in those days, he could get her to do what he wanted. Still could, she imagined.

"We should have seen each other every so often," he said. "Just as friends. Just for lunch, maybe."

"Oh, but you know I'd find that impossible. I couldn't operate on that basis. Friends!" She made the word sound evil. "But I kept up with what you were doing."

"Spying on me?"

"Not exactly." A mischievous gleam appeared in her eyes.

"And just what did you find out?"

"What did I find out? That you have an incredible offer to write and act in your own made-for-tv movie for ABC—"

"NBC."

"Okay, NBC. That you're a supporting lead in a film coming out from Columbia next spring—"

"It's Warners, but you're in the ball park." He was obviously flattered.

"Now that you have revealed how attentive you've been to my career, maybe you'll tell me what happened to Carl?" He leaned forward, his breath mingling with hers. "You weren't the only one doing the spying."

"Then if your spies are any good, you certainly should know."

"I know you two broke up. That's about as far as I got. My spies aren't terribly informative. I gather you two weren't getting along."

"That's not the half of it. I had to get a court order to keep him away from me."

Max's eyebrows rose; he looked both surprised and a bit pleased. "That bad, was it?"

"Worse. Someday I'll tell you all about it. But not now. I don't have the energy."

They were leaving Sardi's when she asked after Janis. "Fair's fair," she said.

His face darkened; he looked away from her. "She died," he said simply.

"Oh, Max, I'm so sorry. I didn't know." Her informants might have kept her abreast of his business deals, but they were obviously ignorant of his personal life.

"I don't want anyone's sympathy," he said. It was a comment not really meant for her; it was more a declaration of policy.

"I understand." But maybe she didn't; maybe there was no possibility of ever truly understanding another person's loss. She had never met Janis, only heard about her from people she then knew out on the coast; Janis and Max had lived there briefly before moving back to New York. Ironically, once she herself had gotten back to New York, no one had seemed to know Janis. Max they knew; Max everyone knew. She squeezed his hand, but he did not appear to register the gesture.

Then, abruptly, he opened up. "It happened just about a year ago. There was nothing anyone could have done. First it was lymphoma, then it was nothing. It went into remission, you know. Then it came back, but this time they called it leukemia, as though the classification made a difference. The damn shame of it was that it took so long to kill her and kept giving her false hope. I don't know, maybe all hope is false."

"No, Max, don't."

"She was only twenty-six. I see old bag ladies leading incredibly unhealthy existences, and I think, you know, why did *they* make it, why did she have to die?" He released a miserable laugh. "She barely drank—a couple of glasses of wine—didn't smoke, slept well, exercised, used to ski, jog ... And you get these bums—they drink and do three packs a day, and nothing happens to them. Why is that, Tillie?"

Tillie didn't know. How could anyone? Max was always looking for answers no one had.

"Sorry," he said, "don't mind me. It makes me so bitter, thinking about it." He brightened suddenly. "Well, if anything good came out of it, it gave me some perspective. All these movie deals, the Broadway shows—they're important, I've worked my ass off for years to get them. But I can put it all in context. If it works, fine. If not, well, it's not the end of the world. I've seen what the end of the world looks like. You remember how I used to scream at you because I thought you were getting in the way of my career?"

"I remember," she said neutrally.

"I don't do that sort of thing anymore. I must have been crazy."

"A little."

All at once he stopped. "You know what? We don't seem to have a destination, and it's getting

The Voices of the Dead

colder out here."

"You still live where you used to? Where *we* used to?"

He glanced quickly at her to see what he could decipher in her face.

"Yes, I do. I'm never going to give it up—you kidding? The rent I'm paying?"

"Well, then we have our destination. See how easy it is?"

Very little had changed since she had left him. Sinking into the lightweight captain's chair and closing her eyes, she could imagine herself right back to five years ago.

Time, she thought, time had a way of canceling itself out now and again.

Max was busy in the bedroom, shuffling, perhaps moving something. She opened her eyes, but from her perspective she could see only his shadow sliding across the floor and suddenly, with a shift in position, taking form on the wall.

She scrutinized the apartment, looking for signs that time had made some impact. Her eyes were caught by the elegant arrangement of dried flowers that sprang from a coral-blue Chinese vase. She wondered if Max had become so domestic in the intervening years as to provide this homey touch. Only then did she realize that it was she, years before, who had gone out and acquired the flowers and the vase and had done the arranging. Max had merely left it the way it was. It both amused and unsettled her a bit.

He emerged from the bedroom, his jacket still on; he seemed slightly ill at ease. It was then that she sensed it might take longer than she'd hoped for him to accustom himself to her again. But she was sure that it would happen. In any case, it was what she wanted to happen.

Months passed, taking autumn and turning it, after a bitter seizure of winter, into a rainy spring. Tillie had begun to spend so many nights each week at Max's small rent-controlled flat that, when her lease expired, it seemed to them only natural that she move in with him. Though dubious as to the ultimate wisdom of this step, Tillie nonetheless was truly convinced that Max had changed, that they could make a go of it again, this time successfully.

What's more, she was virtually certain that this was what fate had intended—or why else would it taunt them so frequently by bringing them together like this? Surely it would be something akin to blasphemy to continue living apart from him.

There were, inevitably, the bad times, when Max would revert to the Max of old, liable to tantrums and rages, protracted silences and bouts

of paranoia; there was no telling what could set him off. Yet on the whole he made an effort to fight his unruly emotions, to contain them. He seemed to accept, at first tacitly, later on in words, Tillie's notion that fate meant them to be together: soul mates.

He seldom spoke of Janis; perhaps her memory was too painful to him. Only once did he mention that he had never seen her dead. Her family had held a wake for her; her body, he said, was exhibited; people sat around and wept, but more often talked—and talked not of the dead but of other things, worldly things. He'd been told she looked nothing like the lovely, vital young woman he had known; the ordeal she'd endured had defiled her. And he had not gone to the gravesite, which he said was "upstate somewhere."

But she did not, as Tillie feared, cast a pall over their lives, and Tillie began gradually to believe that she was in some way responsible for delivering Max from his sorrow.

It was at a party downtown that Tillie first heard of the idea, and while it sounded completely implausible, even absurd, it fascinated her. The more she considered it, the more fascinating it got. What harm could there be in trying it out?

She told Max about it. There was very little she kept from him.

"My friend Rita—you know, the dancer with anorexia?—she was telling me that some people she knew had once taken a tape recorder to a cemetery, I don't know where—at night, of course, when else?—and they turned on the recorder there, then took the tape home and listened. And she said that the machine picked up *voices*, even though the cemetery had been perfectly silent. Isn't that the eeriest thing you ever heard? It sent chills up my spine when she told me."

Max frowned. "You don't believe that crap, do you?"

"I don't think so. But it would be interesting to experiment, just for the hell of it, really."

"I don't like it."

But he didn't want to get into an argument over this; he would not stand in Tillie's way. In fact, he could think of no overriding reasons why she shouldn't carry out her experiment.

"Would you come with me? Just to be there? I don't want to go by myself. I'd be afraid."

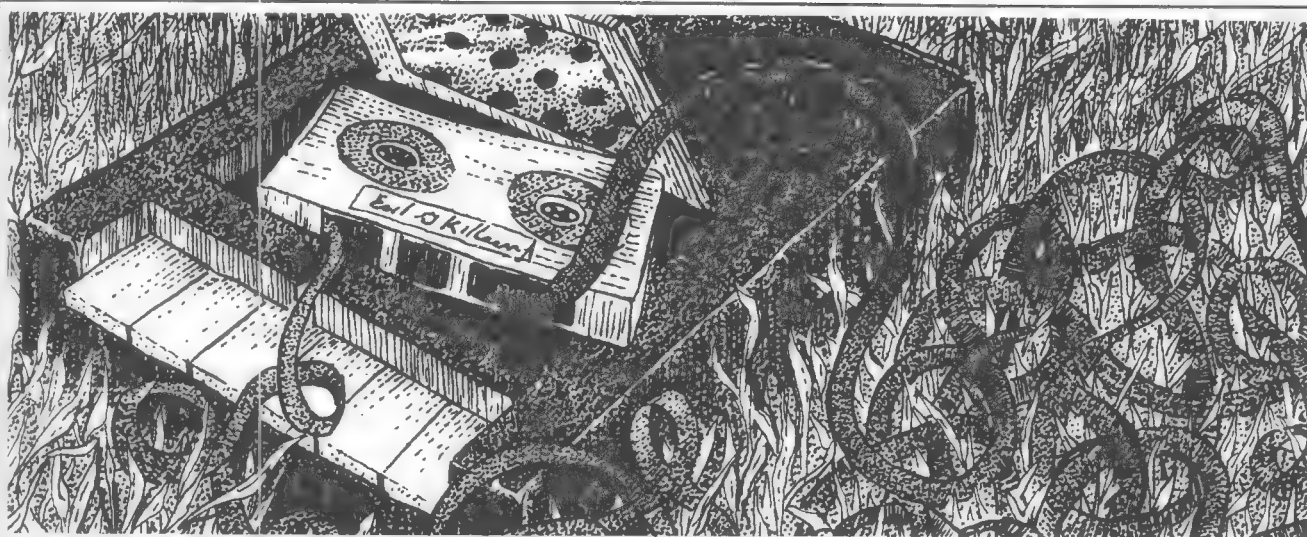
"Not on your life."

They laughed at this; unintended references to death had a way of creeping into conversation.

She fell silent, disappointed. Then all at once she brightened. "I'll call Charlie."

"Charlie? He won't go for it."

"Oh, you don't know Charlie." Right away she got on the phone.



Charlie Powers, having just recently become a father, was mostly housebound these days, tending to his newborn. For years he and the woman who would one day become his wife had toured the provinces in road companies, awaiting the more lucrative and stationary opportunities which didn't arise very often. Finally he'd tired of the perennial revivals of *Hello Dolly!* and *Fiddler on the Roof*, and the aimless stretches of highway that he'd had to traverse in temperamental buses and vans. His fiancée had grown similarly frustrated, and together they'd given up their gypsy life for a straighter one.

Charlie had gone out and worked, selling stereo component systems and CB equipment in a store on Sixth Avenue that was forever advertising specials on the radio, while Susan, his wife, had remained at home, painting miniatures—a lifelong passion of hers—and nurturing Nelson in her womb. Once Nelson was born, they rotated; Charlie stayed home, tinkering with home computers and playing father; Susan obtained a job with an ad agency, employing her artistic talents to sell products she herself would never think of buying.

A mild-mannered man, Charlie surely had the look of an actor, just right for the role of Macbeth or Hamlet's ghost. Despite the lines and crevices that his forty-two years of life on earth had carved out, despite the pouches that had formed under his eyes, you could still perceive in his face the high-spirited sixteen-year-old he'd once been.

In Tillie's life he played another role altogether, that of confidant who occasionally found himself solicited for advice. Though he had known Max for nearly ten years, and while they maintained a loose but reliable friendship, he had not thought it wise for Tillie to become involved with him yet again. How many times, he had wondered, would it take before she learned? But he'd said nothing to her. And she'd never asked, no doubt suspecting what his opinion would have been.

Charlie enjoyed the prospect of an adventure, so long as it was an adventure that could be held within bounds. Real adventures he wanted nothing to do with. He had a wife and child; responsibility had chastened him. But he told Tillie he could see nothing wrong with accompanying her on her noc-

turnal expedition. Actually, the idea tickled his fancy; it would give him something to talk about at cocktail parties, if anyone should ever invite him to one.

The graveyard that Charlie selected was located in the Bronx; how he knew of it Tillie never determined, though she assumed a relative of his was buried there. Nor did she think she could find it again, for it was Charlie who drove, in his battered VW, and once he got beyond the numbered streets into an area where the streets were named Sedgwick and Jerome and Nagle, she was totally confused. He told her the name of the cemetery, and she promptly forgot. He told her it was Catholic, and this she remembered.

Actually, Charlie wasn't as certain of his geography as he'd thought, for he kept getting lost, taking long darkened streets that they followed for miles, only to end up in a neighborhood that had sunk years before into decrepitude. Sad gray tenement buildings, row upon row, offered them a grotesque vision of post-holocaust America. The same desolate emptiness that showed itself in the broken windows, in the burnt-out roofs and rubble-strewn lots, was duplicated in the eyes of those who observed them from the sidewalks.

There was no one to ask for directions, no friendly gas station to turn into. "Maybe we ought to forget about it, Charlie," Tillie suggested tentatively, but now that Charlie had committed himself to this expedition he had no intention of abandoning it. Besides, as he was quick to point out, at this juncture it was no more difficult to find their destination than it was to get back to Manhattan.

Eventually, after half an hour of driving, Charlie succeeded in stumbling upon it. They parked directly across the street from the entrance.

The neighborhood that bordered the cemetery seemed to Tillie more securely middle class; the buildings, mostly two-story dwellings, were intact and looked reasonably kept up. But this was still a neighborhood where, even in the early evening, silence obtained, and where one could hear the passage of a car a couple of blocks away. Few lights were on in these houses; people must go to bed

The Voices of the Dead

early, Tillie decided, or else settle themselves in the den to watch television.

"Won't there be a guard?" she asked, realizing that she was becoming far more dependent on Charlie than she cared to. She did not want to be afraid, had not thought she would be, but there it was: fear. She resisted the urge to call the whole thing off. Her initial enthusiasm for this enterprise had transferred itself to Charlie.

Looking toward the gatehouse at the entrance to the cemetery, Charlie shook his head. "You see a guard?" he said disdainfully. "If there is one, he's probably asleep. In any case, we're not going in that way. There's a place a few blocks up where it's easy to climb over." Sensing Tillie's fear but mistaking its nature, he squeezed her hand reassuringly. "Look, the worst that could happen is that he'll chase us off."

Tillie half hoped this would occur.

"Don't forget to take the cassette—and lock the doors."

She did both. Her legs felt heavy; they didn't want to carry her where she knew she must go.

Just as Charlie had said, there was a point along the perimeter of the cemetery where the surrounding stone wall suddenly gave way, dipping precipitously so that, to enter, one had merely to straddle a waist-high boulder spotted with moss.

Ailanthus trees whispered in the night breeze. They, and not the graves, were what Tillie and Charlie saw first. Charlie took the lead—though whether he knew where he was going or was just pretending to, Tillie had no idea. The moon was a mere sliver, constantly in danger of being blotted out by the scudding clouds, but there was still some light to guide them on their way, both from the solar lamps near the guardhouse and from the sky itself, which mirrored the myriad lights of the city.

Little by little they could see the tombstones: first a few of them, strangely isolated, unobtrusive white crosses suggesting poverty in life and obscurity in death; then, a minute or two later, thousands upon thousands of them, crosses and mausolea alike: monuments of marble, terra-cotta, mosaic, quartz, and limestone to commemorate and locate the departed.

The breeze soon subsided, but despite the leather coat zipped up to her neck, Tillie was chilled. She did not want to be here; she was stupid to have come. Charlie was too preoccupied to notice.

"Which one? Where?" she asked. Her voice did not sound like her own.

Charlie shrugged. Did it matter? "Why not here?" He indicated a tombstone that was virtually at their feet.

It was a thoroughly ordinary headstone, conventionally designed, marble in texture, arched

on top. The severe Roman characters engraved on its surface spelled out the name of one Calvin Sorel, Beloved of Martha and Louis: *He Exchanged Time for Eternity. Jan. 15, 1920–Aug. 6, 1929.*

A child, Tillie thought, a son. And dead so young.

She wondered when she would make the same exchange—when Max would, when Charlie would, when they all would—and she wondered, too, what their credit would be like upon its completion.

Charlie took the recorder from her and laid it gently in front of the headstone. Tillie stood by, observing, hugging herself as she thought: *Maybe we should have chosen another grave, of somebody older, somebody who'd had a chance to accumulate wisdom and experience.* But the dead were the dead, after all. Either they had something to say to the living or they didn't.

Kneeling, Charlie tested the cassette. "Hello? Hello? One two three four five." He played it back. Every word was returned to him; at least the recorder was working.

"You have some paper?" he asked Tillie. "A pen?" She nodded, producing one and then the other. "I want you to write down anything you hear, any sound at all. So we'll know if what we got on tape is different, you see?"

She nodded dumbly. *Should I write down that we heard the breeze? she thought. Should I write down the sound it makes when it disturbs the leaves?*

It seemed too simple, too anticlimactic, standing there, waiting, careful not to speak, not to move about for fear the fall of a foot would register on the tape.

Tillie looked out at all the graves. Maybe there weren't so many, but they appeared to stretch in waves to the horizon, yet never entirely merging into the darkness; too white for that. She imagined all these dead people crying out, a raging chorus of thousands defying their eternal fate.

The click of a button, as Charlie shut the machine off, was almost enough to make her jump.

"I guess that's enough. We gave Calvin almost fifteen minutes."

Tillie disapproved of Charlie's mockery, at least here.

They left the way they had come. Tillie thought: *At least I can get out, and vowed; When I am dead they will have to scatter my ashes to the wind, to the sea. They won't dare bury me.*

In the car, parked across the street, Charlie offered to play it back and hear what they'd gotten, if anything.

"No," she said, spooked more by the disquieting tranquility of this residential neighborhood than she was by the cemetery itself. "No, let's get back and then we'll do it."

Charlie found his way back to the living of

They continued to listen.
A little less than
two minutes remained.
It was then
that they heard
a strange garbled sound—
not quite human, exactly,
but nearly so,
like something struggling
to be human.

Manhattan quicker than he had to the dead of the Bronx; they were back at Max's apartment in half an hour. Max was seated in the kitchen, sipping coffee, watching a late-night movie without interest. "Well?" he asked, when Tillie let Charlie and herself in. "How did your experiment work out?"

"Don't know yet," Tillie said. Now, in more comfortably familiar precincts, she'd regained some of her initial enthusiasm. As apprehensive as she was, she was nonetheless eager to hear what they had brought back with them.

Charlie seated himself and pressed the rewind key, listening to the harsh whine of the tape going backwards.

Tillie dug out a bottle of Piper Scotch from a small cabinet beneath the sink. "We may need this," she said. "I sure do."

Only Max declined the booze.

"Here goes nothing," Charlie said, when the cassette was ready.

"That might be literally correct, you know," Tillie added. *It would be better for us all if there's nothing*, she thought.

They could make out, faintly, the occasional intrusion of a car or the louder rumble of a truck and, once, the abrasive *whoop-whooping* of an ambulance siren, and now and then a muffled sound that might have originated from either Tillie or Charlie when they shifted their feet. From the dead, though, they received nothing. For protracted stretches the tape produced only a sustained hissing, as though the cassette recorder were protesting the task allotted it.

Tillie looked at Charlie, then, more sheepishly, at Max. "Well, at least it satisfied my curiosity."

Charlie hushed her. "Wait, I think I heard something." Pressing the rewind, he leaned closer to the machine, his head hovering just above it.

"I didn't hear anything," said Max.

"Listen again." He punched the play button. For moments all they heard was the tape's indifferent hiss. Then, as though from very far away, there was a plaintive cry. It faded away almost immediately. Charlie played it back again.

"You remember hearing anything like that?" he asked Tillie.

"No," she said. She didn't need to consult her notes.

They continued to listen. Another five minutes passed without yielding anything of even remote interest. A little less than two minutes remained. It was then that they heard a strange garbled sound—not quite human, exactly, but nearly so, like something struggling to be human. Tillie could recall hearing nothing like this in her life. It might have been a person speaking in tongues from under six feet of water; it persisted for no more than twenty seconds, then ceased. Then there was nothing.

Charlie played it again, but even a second and a third time the sound remained as incomprehensible, as mysterious, as it had on first hearing.

Tillie could barely stand it. Each time she heard it she shuddered; there was something terribly painful about this incoherent communication, and she found herself resenting Charlie's fixation on it.

"Shut it off," she commanded, trying to keep her voice even.

Charlie complied.

"You didn't hear anything like that when you were up there?" Max asked suddenly.

"Nothing, I swear to you."

"And you're sure the tape was clean when you put it in?"

She nodded. "I bought it yesterday. I just put it in today."

"Possibly it was some kind of electrical disturbance in the air," said Charlie. "Something human ears can't pick up." There was no conviction in his voice.

"Where was this graveyard?"

"It's called Everlasting Mercy," said Charlie. "It's up in—"

But Max cut him off. "I know where it is." He reached forward, planting a finger on the rewind button, then the one marked *record*, effectively erasing what they had. No one stopped him. "This will solve our problem," he said. "It's all gone. All goddamn gone."

It was after Charlie had left, excusing himself as soon as he could, that Tillie turned to Max and asked, "Why are you so upset?"

"I'm not."

"Something's bothering you, I can tell."

"Nothing's bothering me," he snapped.

Tillie left him in silence until later, when they were getting ready for bed. "Max, can I ask you a question?"

He seemed to have regained some of his good humor. "Sure."

The Voices of the Dead

"How did you know where the cemetery was?"

He eyed her uncertainly for a moment. "Janis is there."

"Oh." She was stunned. Not buried there, he had said. Just *is* there. "I thought you told me she was—her grave was upstate."

Max shrugged and gave her a wan smile. "The Bronx, upstate, what's the difference? Soon as you get above Manhattan, it's all the same to me."

Tillie slept poorly that night, thinking not of strangled cries from the dead but of how she had unwittingly hurt Max; she had invaded his past in some way that she could not fully comprehend, and by playing with a cassette recorder in the cemetery where Janis was buried—for all she knew, in the next plot over from Calvin Sorel's—she had defiled the girl's memory. She would have to make it up to Max someday; she didn't know how, but she swore she would.

Despite her resolve, she could never decide upon the appropriate gesture. And it probably wouldn't have made any real difference, for that night marked the end of something between them—although it would be some time before Tillie realized what it was.

Still, by the next morning Max seemed to have recovered his good humor, and the incident at the cemetery never came up between them again.

In fact, their life together settled down into such a routine that Tillie was taken completely by surprise when Max announced one day that a deal with Filmways had come through. He said that this would mean going on location—"somewhere in North Carolina"—for a month. As he'd mentioned nothing about this before, it took Tillie a while to get used to the idea. Yet though she wasn't happy about the long separation, she recognized that this deal would undoubtedly advance Max's career, and so tried to be as enthusiastic and supportive as possible.

He promised to stay in touch, and was nearly as good as his word; he phoned three or four times a week, though he was careful to keep his remarks to a minimum, saying practically nothing about his work. Tillie accounted his reticence to the mounting cost of the long-distance calls and let it go at that.

It was when he returned that Tillie became aware of how much he had changed. There was suddenly no way to conduct a conversation with him; he constantly found reason to criticize her, or else pretended not to hear what she was saying. He began to withdraw, closing himself off in his bedroom, vanishing for several hours at a time, staying out all night on several occasions. Nor

would he ever disclose to Tillie where he'd been or what he'd been up to. Finally she stopped asking, afraid of provoking him further.

One night, while Max was away, Tillie received a phone call from his agent, Gus Winston. She liked Winston; in a business where agents were often suspected of either ignoring their clients or cheating them out of money and parts, Winston was an exception. Accordingly, Tillie was astounded to learn that Max had fired him.

"Have you any idea why he'd do a thing like that?" Winston asked, more bewildered than bitter. "He just calls me out of the blue and with no explanation tells me I'm through. I thought you might know some reason."

But Tillie didn't. "Max never had an unkind word to say about you. Why should he do something like this now, after you got him that Filmways deal—"

"What Filmways deal?"

"The feature he was shooting last month."

"What feature? I never heard about it."

"But . . . But he called me every week. From North Carolina."

"Tillie, I don't know what you're talking about. Maybe I haven't had much contact with Max lately, but I certainly would've heard about this North Carolina project. Especially if Max was involved."

Tillie told Max what his agent—now ex-agent—had said.

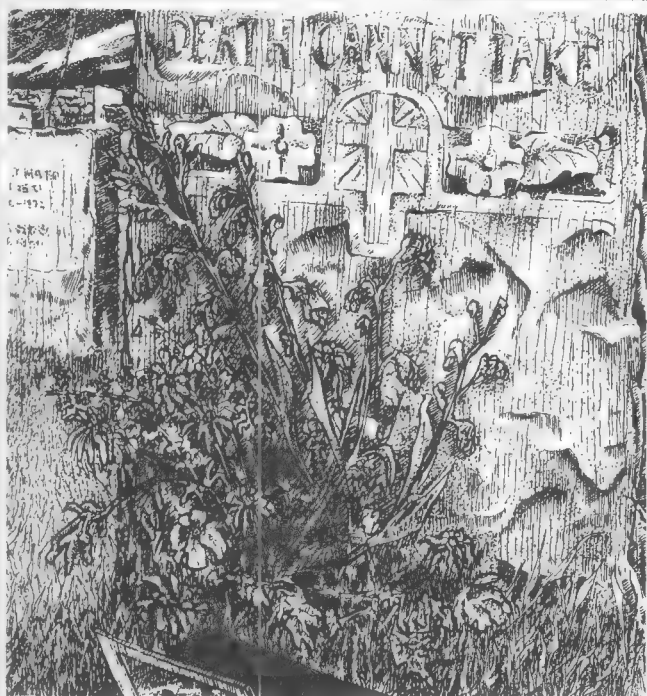
"Aw, Gus!" said Max, shaking his head. "Gus is so out of touch with things you wouldn't believe it! Why do you think I got rid of him? He was a liability."

Though she didn't question his explanation, Tillie wasn't altogether convinced. At any rate, if he hadn't been in North Carolina, she wasn't sure she wanted to find out where he'd been instead.

In the succeeding weeks she began to stay away from the apartment for long periods of time, just as Max was doing; she seized the opportunity for extended visits with friends and relations. But eventually she tired of this ploy; it seemed senseless to her to keep on making excuses for her protracted absences. She proposed a trial separation.

She had no idea where she'd settle, but for now it wasn't important; she had enough friends who'd put her up until she'd made alternative arrangements—or moved back with Max, if he ever freed himself of this madness. So long as he remained in its grip, she was afraid to go near him.

The only person she could think to call for advice was Charlie. He was still able to get along with Max, or at least hadn't broken with him the way other friends had. Charlie had the knack of



ignoring excesses and tantrums. Nothing ever seemed to bother him.

"Well, hold tight, Tillie," he said when she called him, "and don't worry. I'll check the situation out and get back to you."

"Please do it quickly, Charlie. I'm very concerned."

More than a week passed before he contacted her. "I think I have some news," he told her on the phone. (Why did he sound so tentative? she wondered.) "Can we meet at Joe Allen's around eight?"

That was many hours away, but he refused to say more. Tillie resigned herself to waiting.

Charlie appeared on time. Tillie was already there. Joining her at a table in the corner, he warned her that she mustn't be upset, that there was no reason to become seriously alarmed—which had, inevitably, the opposite effect. *Get on with it*, she wanted to say, but restrained herself.

"I'm afraid it's about Janis," he said. "I don't know what he's told you about her."

"I know a fair amount."

He studied her face for a moment. "I don't think you really do, Tillie."

"Well, Max told me how close they were, and I know how hard he took it when she died."

"Possibly. But tell me, have you ever seen a picture of her?"

"Why ... no, I guess not."

"Did you know that he had a painting of her, a portrait, that he hung on his bedroom wall, and that he lit a candle beneath it every evening? He removed them both when you moved in."

"That makes sense," she said. And then, too quickly: "He probably didn't want to hurt my feelings." A memory intruded. On that first night, when he'd taken her to his apartment—to *their* apartment—he'd gone immediately to the bedroom. Now she understood why.

"Of course, everybody grieves for somebody they loved who's died like that," said Charlie. "That's only natural. But I'm afraid Max ... well, he went a little overboard. He literally worshiped Janis's memory."

"Did you ever meet her, Charlie?"

"Once at an opening Max brought her to. She was lovely—big brown eyes, I remember. I didn't have a sense that she was extraordinary in any way, but who am I to say? For Max, it was as if she were a kind of saint. 'Janis is love,' he said to me, when it was clear she was not going to last too long. 'Janis is love.' That was when he was running to the hospital every day, twice a day sometimes, donating whole blood and platelets. He never felt he'd done quite enough."

"Max always blames himself when things don't work out, when people disappoint him."

"I didn't realize it, I don't think any of his friends did, but until you came along he was still hopelessly in love with her. He couldn't let her go, you see."

Tillie frowned.

"A stranger couldn't have broken through to him," he continued, "but you, you were different. You were from before Janis. He needed someone, and you came along at the right time."

This assessment only frustrated her. Was she good for nothing but making an entrance on time? "Did I do anything wrong, Charlie? Was there more I could have done?"

"Absolutely not. This has nothing to do with you. Remember our experiment a couple of months ago?"

"How could I forget?"

"When was the last time you were over at Max's?"

"Oh, a couple of weeks ago. I stopped over to pick up some things."

Charlie nodded, as if something had been confirmed.

"I stopped by there earlier this week. He didn't exactly welcome me, but he wasn't inhospitable either—mostly indifferent. Distracted, I guess you'd say. He told me to wait for him while he ran a few errands and picked up some beer. Insisted I stay—said there was a call he was expecting." He paused for a moment. "So ... the opportunity was there."

"You had a look around?"

He shrugged, "It seemed the only way."

"What did you find?" She was certain he must have found something.

"A cassette recorder in the top drawer of the bureau. And next to it, a black notebook. I skimmed through it."

"And?"

The Voices of the Dead

"It was filled with dates and times, and little notations. Like 'April 10th, 10:45 P.M.'—that sort of thing. And beside them he'd write, '*Static tonight,*' or more frequently, '*Nothing! Nothing! Nothing!*' Sometimes they were very detailed, but I didn't read them carefully. Too nervous, I guess. At first, you know, I couldn't decipher any of it. And then it dawned on me what it meant."

She already knew what was coming.

"Every night since late March," he continued, "Max has been traveling to Janis's grave and recording there."

Late March. North Carolina. It made a kind of sense.

"From what I read," said Charlie, "it seems he feels he's *gotten through* to her. Or at least heard her voice."

"The cassette was right there," she said sharply. "Did you play it?"

"I came close. Maybe I was afraid I might hear something, maybe I was afraid there'd be nothing there at all. And then, I was expecting Max back at any moment ... So I just left him a note and let myself out. I wasn't sure I was ready to face him when he came back."

"Charlie! You should have called me immediately."

"I know," he said sheepishly. "But I thought I should talk to him one more time. I've been trying to reach him, right up until tonight, but ..." He shrugged. "No luck."

Tillie's eyes widened. "Do you you think—?"

"Now don't worry," he said quickly. "I'm sure Max is all right."

Tillie rose from the table.

"Where are you going?"

"To see if I can find him."

"Tillie, it might not be advisable. He needs breathing space—"

But Tillie was already searching through her handbag. She threw down a handful of bills. "I've got to go," she said, and hurried from the room.

She still had the key. There was no problem getting in. Better not to think about what she was doing; better to act impulsively than to sit around puzzling out strategies. Otherwise, she feared, she would end up doing nothing.

But even as she entered his apartment, she realized that she had no notion of what she would say to him. *He's sick*, she kept telling herself, *he's sick. It has nothing to do with supernatural forces, with messages from the dead. It's just plain sickness.*

Max was not there. The apartment, she noticed, was strangely clean, the rugs all vacuumed, the furniture dusted, the plants were watered, the sink and bathtub meticulously scrubbed. In the

absence of a woman Max had never been so domestic. It was she who'd brought in all the plants and cared for them; Max would have been satisfied with the dried flowers. Nor would he normally have spent so much time cleaning. It didn't make sense to her. Somehow the apartment looked uninhabited.

Reaching the bedroom, she instinctively turned her eyes toward the wall that faced the double bed. There above the bureau was the portrait of Janis that Charlie had told her about. It was a beautiful face, vivacious and strangely virginal. The artist had captured her smiling, but there was a certain sadness there, as if she'd had a foreboding of her death. Below the portrait, reduced to an inchoate mass of red wax, was the candle that must have flickered there night after night in her memory.

Staring at the portrait, Tillie felt diminished, paler, less attractive; how could she ever have hoped to vanquish her from Max's mind?

Now her eyes fell on the recorder. It lay empty on a table by the bed. A fresh cassette, still in its cellophane wrapper, was resting nearby, as though Max had meant to use it and decided otherwise. There was more tape, yards and yards of it, torn from other cassettes and crammed into the wastebasket. Some of it looked charred. She was reminded of intestines ripped from someone's stomach.

He didn't want anyone else to hear her, she realized. *Her voice was his alone.*

Despairingly, she began rummaging through the bureau drawers, looking for the notebook. But it wasn't hidden. It was right out on the desk. He hadn't bothered to conceal it.

Just as Charlie had told her, the initial pages of the journal revealed only discouragement as Max sought in vain to receive a communication from Janis. "*Hiss and static,*" read one entry. "*Background noise,*" another. "*Unidentified garble—useless,*" yet another. Later on, toward the end of May, the entries changed in nature; even the handwriting was different, more exaggerated, a barely legible scrawl. "*Human sounds, possibly? A woman?*" And: "*I heard my name called today, almost sure. Practically inaudible but still distinct. I heard my Janis calling me: Max ... Max ...*"

Tillie read faster, scarcely able to breathe.

"*She is here, I'm sure of it.*" This from June 11th, eleven o'clock at night. From the 14th: "*She is happy, I am convinced of it. It is clear to me.*" From the 15th: "*Janis is love. There never was anyone else. Janis and love are one and the same. Why did I ever think otherwise?*"

And that was where it left off. Today was the 18th. Three days gone by. In three days who could tell what might have happened?

The initial pages
of the journal revealed
only discouragement
as Max sought in vain
to receive a communication
from Janis.

Later on, the entries
changed in nature;
even the handwriting
was different,
more exaggerated,
a barely legible scrawl.

There was no hesitation on her part. She unwrapped the fresh cassette, slipped it into the recorder, and started out of the apartment. *No*, she thought, *can't go without a flashlight*. It was where she remembered it—like the dried flowers. Some things never changed.

The third cab driver she signaled agreed to take her up to the Bronx. He even knew the location of Everlasting Mercy Cemetery. It was just that he didn't like the idea of going there in the middle of the night ... but for an extra fee, he was willing.

It took her nearly an hour, when she'd reached the place, to locate the grave. It was a simple rectangular headstone of white granite:

Janis Templeton

1952-1978

*From hence
your memory
death cannot take.*

Shakespeare. Tillie recognized the line from one of the sonnets, and recalled the next lines too: "Although in me each part will be forgotten, Your name from hence immortal life shall have, Though I, once gone, to all the world must die ..."

The earth around the grave was disturbed, the grass sparse and the earth filled with footprints.

There was no breeze tonight, nor cold, just late June warmth. Tillie set down the recorder by the grave and started it. She was no longer afraid; everything seemed ordained. She felt as though she were doing exactly what she was supposed to. She did not know what would come—only that, whatever it was, she was helpless to alter anything.

She had no idea how much time had elapsed since she'd turned on the recorder, but the cassette was nearing its end. Impatient, she decided to play it back right there.

A hissing sound was all she heard, a sound as blank and monotonous as the void. The minutes wore on, and still the sound continued.

And then the words came.

Or rather, one word, faint and faraway and exhaustingly repeated, a breathless whisper echoing from some vast distance:

"Darling ... darling ... darling ... darling ... darling ... darling ... darling ..."

Like a litany, it came like someone overheard beyond a wall, lost in the throes of lovemaking.

"Darling, darling, darling, darling ..."

On it went, urgent and unceasing.

"Darling darling darling darling ..."

She pressed the fast-forward key, yards of tape advanced, and still there was only that one sole endearment made meaningless by repetition.

"Darlingdarlingdarlingdarlingdarling ..."

But the voice she'd come all this way to hear, the voice of Janis Templeton, was nowhere on the tape.

Instead there was another voice, familiar and unmistakably masculine. A voice meant—she was suddenly sure—for her and her alone.

Max's voice.

When the first gray light of false dawn reached her, she awoke and stood abruptly, her legs painfully cramped. Slowly she managed to draw herself away from the gravesite, away from the white granite and the trodden earth. Yet all the while, as it receded behind her, she was memorizing its precise location for the time when she would return. 17

U.S. POSTAL SERVICE STATEMENT OF OWNERSHIP, MANAGEMENT, AND CIRCULATION (required by 39 U.S.C. 3685). 1. Title of publication: ROD SERLING'S THE TWILIGHT ZONE MAGAZINE. 2. Date of filing: October 23, 1981. 3. Frequency of issue: monthly. 3A. No. of issues published annually: 12. 3B. Annual subscription price: \$22. 4. Complete mailing address of known office of publication (not printer): 800 Second Avenue, New York, NY 10017. 5. Complete mailing address of the headquarters or general business offices of the publishers (not printer): 800 Second Avenue, New York, NY 10017. 6. Full names and complete mailing address of publisher, editor, and managing editor: Leon Garry, Publisher, 800 Second Avenue, New York, NY 10017; T.E.D. Klein, Editor, 800 Second Avenue, New York, NY 10017; Jane Bayer, Managing Editor, 800 Second Avenue, New York, NY 10017. 7. Owners or stockholders owning or holding 1 percent or more of total amount of stock: TZ Publications, Inc., 800 Second Avenue, New York, NY 10017; Montclair Publishing Corporation, 300 Second Avenue, New York, NY 10017; Eric Protter, 800 Second Avenue, New York, NY 10017; Nils Shapiro, 3420 Ocean Park Blvd., Santa Monica, CA 90405. 8. Known bondholders: None. 9. For completion by nonprofit organizations authorized to mail at special rates: Not applicable. 10. Extent and nature of circulation. Average no. copies each issue during preceding 12 months: A. Total no. copies (net press run)—191,985; B. Paid circulation, 1. Sales through dealers and carriers, street vendors, and counter sales—52,196; 2. Mail subscription—18,599; C. Total paid circulation (sum of 10B1 and 10B2)—54,055; D. Free distribution by mail, carrier or other means, samples, complimentary, and other free copies—309; E. Total distribution (sum of C and D)—54,364; F. Copies not distributed, 1. Office use, left over, unaccounted, spoiled after printing—198; 2. Return from news agents—137,423; G. Total (sum of E, F1 and 2, should equal net press run shown in A)—191,985. 10. Extent and nature of circulation. Actual no. copies of single issue published nearest to filing date: A. Total no. copies (net press run)—168,306; B. Paid circulation, 1. Sales through dealers and carriers, street vendors, and counter sales—52,000; 2. Mail subscription—5,700; C. Total paid circulation (sum of 10B1 and 10B2)—57,700; D. Free distribution by mail, carrier or other means, samples, complimentary, and other free copies—846; E. Total distribution (sum of C and D)—58,546; F. Copies not distributed, 1. Office use, left over, unaccounted, spoiled after printing—160; 2. Return from news agents—109,600; G. Total (sum of E, F1 and 2, should equal net press run shown in A)—168,306. I certify that the statements made by me above are correct and complete; signature and title of editor, publisher, business manager, or owner: Eric Protter, Associate Publisher.

TV's Twilight Zone: Part Eleven

CONTINUING MARC SCOTT ZICREE'S
SHOW-BY-SHOW GUIDE TO THE ENTIRE
TWILIGHT ZONE TELEVISION SERIES,
COMPLETE WITH ROD SERLING'S OPENING
AND CLOSING NARRATIONS



"There is a fifth dimension, beyond that which is known to man. It is a dimension as vast as space and as timeless as infinity. It is the middle ground between light and shadow, between science and superstition, and it lies between the pit of man's fears and the summit of his knowledge. This is the dimension of imagination. It is an area which we call the Twilight Zone."



94. THE LITTLE PEOPLE

Written by Rod Serling
Producer: Buck Houghton
Director: William Claxton
Dir. of Photography: George T. Clemens
Music: Stock

Cast

Peter Craig: Joe Maross
William Fletcher: Claude Akins
Spaceman #1: Michael Ford
Spaceman #2: Robert Eaton

"The time is the space age, the place is a barren landscape of a rock-walled canyon that lies millions of miles from the planet Earth. The cast of characters? You've met them: William Fletcher, commander of the spaceship; his co-pilot, Peter Craig. The other characters who inhabit this place you may never see, but they're there, as these two gentlemen will soon find out. Because they're about to partake in a little exploration into that gray shaded area in space and time that's known as the Twilight Zone."

After their ship is damaged by meteors, Fletcher and Craig set down in the canyon to effect repairs. While Fletcher works on the engines, Craig investigates the terrain. He discovers an earth-type civilization populated by beings no larger than ants. Craig becomes a full-blown megalomaniac, terrorizing the little people by stamping on their city and proclaiming himself as

a god. When Fletcher informs him that the ship is fixed and that they can leave, Craig pulls a gun on him and orders him to depart—alone. He intends to stay, and there's not enough room for two gods. Fletcher blasts off. But then, another ship lands. Two spacemen emerge, bigger than mountains, and towering over Craig. Hysterically, he screams at them to go away. Drawn by the sound, one of the spacemen picks Craig up, inadvertently crushing him to death.

"The case of navigator Peter Craig, victim of a delusion. In this case, the dream dies a little harder than the man. A small exercise in space psychology that you can try on for size—in the Twilight Zone."



95. FOUR O'CLOCK

Written by Rod Serling
Based on the story by Price Day
Producer: Buck Houghton
Director: Lamont Johnson
Dir. of Photography: George T. Clemens
Music: Stock

Cast

Oliver Crangle: Theodore Bikel
Mrs. Williams: Moyna MacGill
Mrs. Lucas: Phyllis Love
Hall: Linden Chiles

"That's Oliver Crangle, a dealer in petulance and poison. He's rather arbitrarily chosen four o'clock as his personal Gotterdammerung, and we are about to watch the metamorphosis of a twisted fanatic, poisoned by the gangrene of prejudice, to the status of an avenging angel, upright and omniscient, dedicated and fearsome. Whatever your clocks say, it's four o'clock—and wherever you are, it happens to be the Twilight Zone."

Political fanatic Oliver Crangle keeps detailed files on people, and makes phone calls and sends letters discrediting those he has decided are evil. By mystical and unspecified means, he devises a way to shrink every evil person in the world to a height of two feet at exactly four o'clock. But when the time rolls around, it is *he* who becomes two feet tall!

"At four o'clock, an evil man made his bed and lay in it, a pot called a kettle black, a stone thrower broke the windows of his glass house. You look for this one under 'F' for fanatic and 'J' for justice—in the Twilight Zone."



96. THE TRADE-INS

Written by Rod Serling
Producer: Buck Houghton
Director: Elliot Silverstein
Dir. of Photography: George T. Clemens
Music: Stock

Cast

John Holt: Joseph Schildkraut
Marie Holt: Alma Platt
Mr. Vance: Noah Keen
Farraday: Theodore Marcuse
John Holt (young): Edson Stroll
Gambler #1: Terrence de Marney
Gambler #2: Billy Vincent
Receptionist: Mary McMahon
Attendant: David Armstrong

"Mr. and Mrs. John Holt, aging people who slowly and with trembling fingers turn the last pages of a book of life and hope against logic and the preordained that some magic printing press will add to this book another limited edition. But these two senior citizens happen to live in a time of the future where nothing is impossible, even the trading of old bodies for new. Mr. and Mrs. John Holt, in their twilight years—who are about to find that there happens to be a zone with the same name."

John and Marie Holt visit the New Life Corporation, hoping to transplant their personalities into youthful, artificial bodies. Unfortunately, they have only \$5,000—just enough for one body. Marie pleads with John—who is in constant pain—to have the operation himself, but he won't hear of it. Trying to double his money, John seeks out a poker game but succeeds only in losing the entire \$5,000. Farraday, who runs the

game, takes pity on him and gives him back his money. Finally, overwhelmed by the pain, John submits to the operation. He emerges young and strong and free of pain. Enthusiastically, he tells Marie of their life to come, one filled with excitement and adventure. Suddenly, he stops, horrified in his realization that she is still old. The transformation has created a gulf between them. John returns to his old body, content that he and Marie will spend what time they have left together.

"From Kahil Gibran's The Prophet: 'Love gives not but itself and takes not from itself, love possesses not nor would it be possessed, for love is sufficient unto love.' Not a lesson, just a reminder, from all the sentimentalists in the Twilight Zone."



97. HOCUS-POCUS AND FRISBY

Written by Rod Serling
Based on an unpublished story by Frederic Louis Fox
Producer: Buck Houghton
Director: Lamont Johnson
Dir. of Photography: George T. Clemens and Jack Swain
Music: Tom Morgan
Makeup: William Tuttle
Cast
Frisby: Andy Devine
Alien #1: Milton Selzer
Alien #2: Larry Breitman
Mitchell: Howard McNear
Scanlan: Dabbs Greer
Old Man: Clem Bevans
Alien #3: Peter Brocco

"The reluctant gentleman with the sizable mouth is Mr. Frisby. He has all the drive of a broken camshaft and the aggressive vinegar of a corpse. As you've no doubt gathered, his big stock in trade is the tall tale. Now, what he doesn't know is that the visitors out front are a very special breed, destined to change his life beyond anything even his fertile imagination could manufacture. The place is Pitchville Flats; the time is the present. But Mr. Frisby's on the first leg of a rather fanciful journey into the place we call the Twilight Zone."

Taking Frisby's self-aggrandizing tales at face value, aliens masquerading as men spirit him away to their flying saucer with the intention of taking him home as a zoo specimen—the optimum human. Unable to convince them of their error, Frisby decides to relax by playing his harmonica, and discovers that the sound knocks the aliens

out! Frisby escapes, and the frightened aliens hurriedly depart. Returning to the combination general store and gas station he owns, Frisby finds all his friends waiting for him with a surprise birthday party. But when he tries to tell them of his abduction—no one believes him!

"Mr. Somerset Frisby, who might have profited by reading an Aesop fable about a boy who cried wolf. Tonight's tall tale from the timberlands—of the Twilight Zone."



98. THE DUMMY

Written by Rod Serling
Based on an unpublished story by Lee Polk
Producer: Buck Houghton
Director: Abner Biberman
Dir. of Photography: George T. Clemens
Music: Stock
Cast
Jerry Etherson: Cliff Robertson
Frank: Frank Sutton
Willie (as ventriloquist): George Murdock
Georgie: John Harmon
Noreen: Sandra Warner
M.C.: Rudy Dolan
Doorkeeper: Ralph Manza
Chorus Girl: Bethelynn Grey
Chorus Girl: Edy Williams

"You're watching a ventriloquist named Jerry Etherson, a voice thrower par excellence. His alter ego, sitting atop his lap, is a brash stick of kindling with the sobriquet 'Willie.' In a moment, Mr. Etherson and his knotty pine partner will be booked in one of the out-of-the-way bistros, that small, dark, intimate place known as the Twilight Zone."

Jerry, who drinks more than is good for him, is convinced that Willie is alive—and malevolent. Frank, Jerry's manager, believes Jerry's problem is entirely in his mind, but Jerry refuses to listen to him. Instead, he determines to attempt to escape from Willie. When his act with Goofy Goggles—a dummy without a will of his own—is well received, Jerry locks Willie in a trunk and departs the club with Goofy, intending to abandon Willie. But suddenly, Jerry hears Willie's voice, taunting him, and sees Willie's shadow on a wall. In a frenzy, he rushes back to the club,

unlocks the trunk and smashes the dummy to pieces. To his horror, he sees it is Goofy he has destroyed. Willie laughs maniacally. Sometime later, Willie and Jerry play a club in Kansas City, but Willie has transformed into the ventriloquist—Jerry is the dummy!

"What's known in the parlance of the times as the old switcheroo, from boss to blockhead in a few uneasy lessons. And if you're given to nightclubbing on occasion, check this act. It's called Willie and Jerry, and they are generally booked into some of the clubs along the 'Gray Night Way' known as the Twilight Zone."



99. THE CHANGING OF THE GUARD

Written by Rod Serling
 Producer: Buck Houghton
 Director: Robert Ellis Miller
 Dir. of Photography: George T. Clemens
 Music: Stock
 Makeup: William Tuttle
Cast
 Prof. Ellis Fowler: Donald Pleasence
 Headmaster: Liam Sullivan
 Mrs. Landers: Philippa Bevans
 Graham: Bob Biheller
 Butler: Kevin O'Neal
 With Jimmy Baird, Kevin Jones,
 Tom Lowell, Russell Horton, Buddy
 Hart, Darryl Richard, James
 Browning, Pat Close and Dennis
 Kerlee

"Professor Ellis Fowler, a gentle, bookish guide to the young, who is about to discover that life still has certain surprises, and that the campus of the Rock Springs School for Boys lies on a direct path to another institution, commonly referred to as the Twilight Zone."

Preparing to leave for Christmas vacation, Professor Fowler is informed by the headmaster that, after fifty-one years of teaching, he is to be forcibly retired. Fowler is devastated by this news and begins to brood. That evening, having decided that his teaching has accomplished nothing, he takes a pistol and walks back to the school, determined to commit suicide. Suddenly, he hears the school bell. He enters his classroom—and sees the ghosts of a number of his now-deceased students materialize. They're there for a purpose: to convince him that his lessons helped them to go on and commit acts of

bravery. Fowler returns home, satisfied that he has made some mark in the world—and content now to retire.

"Professor Ellis Fowler, teacher, who discovered rather belatedly something of his own value. A very small scholastic lesson, from the campus of the Twilight Zone."



100. YOUNG MAN'S FANCY

Written by Richard Matheson
 Producer: Buck Houghton
 Director: John Brahm
 Dir. of Photography: George T. Clemens
 Music: Nathan Scott
Cast
 Virginia: Phyllis Thaxter
 Alex: Alex Nicol
 Mr. Wilkinson: Wallace Rooney
 Mother: Helen Brown
 Alex (age 10): Rickey Kelman

"You're looking at the house of the late Mrs. Henrietta Walker ... a house which belongs almost entirely to the past ... Only one element is missing now ... her son Alex, thirty-four years of age and, up till twenty minutes ago, the so-called perennial bachelor. With him is his bride, the former Miss Virginia Lane. They're returning ... to get Mr. Walker's clothes packed, make final arrangements for the sale of the house, lock it up and depart on their honeymoon. Not a complicated set of tasks ... yet the newlywed Mrs. Walker is about to discover that the old adage, 'You can't go home again,' has little meaning in the Twilight Zone."

Arriving at the house, Alex is overwhelmed with nostalgia for his boyhood. Virginia suspects the spirit of Alex's mother is exerting her influence, a suspicion supported by an old, supposedly broken radio playing the woman's favorite song, a broken clock that starts ticking,

and the reappearance of long-gone furniture, appliances, magazines, and home-made fudge. The allure of the past grows stronger; Alex refuses to sell the house. Then Alex's mother appears on the stairs and confronts Virginia. It is not her wish to return to the past—although it is Alex's. He changes back into a boy again, then tells Virginia to get out. She does—filled with disgust, horror, and loss.

"Exit: Miss Virginia Lane, formerly—and most briefly—Mrs. Alex Walker. She has just given up a battle and in a strange way retreated; but this has been a retreat back to reality. Her opponent, Alex Walker, will now and forever hold a line that exists in the past. He has put a claim on a moment in time and is not about to relinquish it. Such things do happen—in the Twilight Zone."



101. I SING THE BODY ELECTRIC

Written by Ray Bradbury

Producer: Buck Houghton

Director: James Sheldon and

William Claxton

Dir. of Photography: George T. Clemens

Music: Van Cleave

Cast

Grandma: Josephine Hutchinson

Anne (age 11): Veronica Cartwright

Father: David White

Tom (age 12): Charles Herbert

Karen (age 10): Dana Dillaway

Salesman: Vaughn Taylor

Nedra: Doris Packer

Anne (age 19): Susan Crane

Tom (age 20): Paul Nesbitt

Karen (age 18): Judy Morton

"They make a fairly convincing pitch here. It doesn't seem possible, though, to find a woman who might be ten times better than mother in order to seem half as good—except, of course, in the Twilight Zone."

A widower buys a robot grandmother to act as a surrogate mother for his three children. Karen and Tom take to this intelligent, maternal machine almost instantly, but Anne steadfastly refuses to be won over. "Grandma" reminds Anne of her mother—a mother she bitterly resents for having died. When Anne blindly runs into the path of an oncoming van, Grandma throws herself in front of it, saving Anne's life. But Grandma isn't injured; being a robot has its advantages. Realizing that Grandma can't leave her as her mother did, Anne finally lets down her guard and reciprocates the robot's love. Years pass, during which the children grow up under Grandma's

affectionate supervision. As Tom, Anne, and Karen prepare to leave for college, Grandma tells them she is returning to Facsimile, Ltd. She is well-satisfied that her job here is completed.

"A fable? Most assuredly. But who's to say at some distant moment there might be an assembly line product in the form of a grandmother whose stock in trade is love. Fable, sure—but who's to say?"



102. CAVENDER IS COMING

Written by Rod Serling

Producer: Buck Houghton

Director: Chris Nyby

Dir. of Photography: George T. Clemens

Music: Stock

Cast

Agnes Grep: Carol Burnett

Cavender: Jesse White

Polk: Howard Smith

Field Rep #1: William O'Connell

Field Rep #2: Pitt Herbert

Field Rep #3: John Fiedler

Field Rep #4: G. Stanley Jones

With Frank Behrens, Albert Carrier,

Roy Sickner, Norma Shattuc, Rory

O'Brien, Sandra Gould, Adrienne

Marden, Jack Younger, Danny

Kulick, and Donna Douglas

"Small measure of reassurance to that horizontal young lady: don't despair, help is en route. It's coming in an odd form from a very distant place, but it's nonetheless coming ... Submitted for your approval, the case of one Miss Agnes Grep, put on earth with two left feet, an overabundance of thumbs, and a propensity for falling down manholes. In a moment, she will be up to her jaw in miracles, wrought by apprentice angel Harmon Cavender, intent on winning his wings. And, though it's a fact that both of them should have stood in bed, they will tempt all the fates by moving into the cold, gray dawn of the Twilight Zone."

Assigned to help clumsy-but-lovable Agnes Grep as his last chance to win his wings, Cavender provides her with a personal fortune and sets her up in a mansion. Unfortunately, a side effect of this is that none of the people in her old neighborhood—who

previously adored her—now remember her. Preferring friends over riches, Agnes demands to be returned to her old life. Reluctantly, Cavender complies. Polk, Cavender's boss, is furious with him—until he notices that, back on earth, Agnes is extremely happy. Given this, Polk decides that other mortals could use Cavender's services.

"A word to the wise now to any and all who might suddenly feel the presence of a cigar-smoking helpmate who takes bankbooks out of thin air. If you're suddenly aware of any such celestial aids, it means that you're under the beneficent care of one Harmon Cavender, guardian angel. And this message from the Twilight Zone: lotsa luck!" 17



A Stop At Willoughby

by Rod Serling

THE ORIGINAL
TELEVISION SCRIPT
FIRST AIRED ON CBS-TV
MAY 6, 1960

T Z C L A S S I C T E L E P L A Y

CAST

Gart Williams.....James Daly
Jane Williams..Patricia Donahue
Mr. Misrell....Howard Smith
Conductor #1..Jason Wingreen
Conductor #2..James Maloney
Helen.....Mavis Neal
Boy #1.....Billy Booth
Boy #2.....Butch Hengen
Trainman.....Ryan Hayes
Man on Wagon....Max Slaten

ACT ONE

STANDARD OPENING

FADE ON

1.INT. CONFERENCE ROOM DAY

This is a big, sumptuous,

paneled room with a long, low slung table in the center surrounded by ad agency execs.

2.HIGH ANGLE SHOT LOOKING DOWN

At the men around the table. SLOW PAN DOWN until we're looking across and down the table at eye level of the men around it.

3.REVERSE ANGLE LOOKING TOWARD THE HEAD OF TABLE

At Misrell, the president of the ad agency, a fat and overpowering man of giant stature with small piggish

eyes, a perpetually angry and dour face, a challenging look that never leaves. PAN DOWN THE TABLE at the faces of the men sitting there quietly and finally winding up on Gart Williams, a tall, attractive man in a Brooks Brothers suit who drums on the table nervously, checks an expensive looking watch, then rises.

4.TRACK SHOT OVER WITH HIM

To a telephone which he picks up, seems to cup in his hand to keep the others from overhearing his conversation. He's obviously distraught

A Stop At Willoughby

beyond any kind of description now. His face looks pinched and strained. He talks quietly into the phone.

WILLIAMS

I want Jake Ross's secretary!

(he waits impatiently, conscious of Misrell staring at him)

MISRELL'S VOICE

(from opposite side of room)

Williams, we're still waiting for your Mr. Ross!

WILLIAMS

(with a forced smile, over his shoulder)

I'm trying to get him now, sir.

(then into phone)

This Jake Ross's secretary? Joanie! Where is he? I know he's out to lunch. But there was a conference called here at two o'clock. It is now two-thirty, now where is he!

(he wets his lips, forces his voice down an octave)

All right, check around. Call Sardi's East or the Colony and tell him to get his keister back here in a hurry!

He slams down the receiver then fixes his face into a smiling, nonchalant mask and returns to the table.

5. TRACK SHOT WITH HIM

As he walks over to the table, sits down, again smiling toward Mr. Misrell.

6. CLOSE SHOT MISRELL

Who stares back at him, totally unsmiling.

MISRELL

Well? Where is your protégé with the three-million-dollar automobile account?

WILLIAMS

He's due at any moment, sir. Probably a big lunch crowd or something—

MISRELL

Don't be an idiot. More likely a big martini, or three or four of 'em. He

was too young to put on this account—I told you that, Williams. He's much too young to put on this large and important an account—

There's a knock on the door.

7. MOVING SHOT WITH WILLIAMS

As he springs to his feet and hurries over to the big, double conference room doors. He opens it up. A young secretary hands him an envelope which he literally pulls out of her hand, slams the door behind him, rips open the envelope, and starts to read.

8. EXTREMELY TIGHT CLOSE SHOT WILLIAMS'S FACE

As suddenly he looks white, stares up over the letter briefly toward Misrell.

9. CLOSE SHOT MISRELL
Reacting.

10. CLOSE SHOT WILLIAMS

As his eyes slowly go downward and the letter in his hand drops to his side. He carries it very slowly over to the table and stands there at the far end.

11. REVERSE ANGLE LOOKING OVER HIS SHOULDER

Down the length of the table at Misrell who very slowly drums on the table in a methodical, tapping that permeates the silence of the room.

MISRELL

Well? We have now been here thirty-four minutes, Mr. Williams.

WILLIAMS

(looks up from the letter, takes a deep breath)

This is a communication from Jake Ross.

MISRELL

Would you be so kind as to share its contents with us?

12. MED. CLOSE SHOT WILLIAMS

As he looks down at the letter, spreads it out on the top of the table, then looks up from it.

WILLIAMS

I can tell you the sense of it very quickly, Mr. Misrell.

This is Jake Ross's resignation. He's moving over to another agency.

13. CLOSE SHOT MISRELL

As his face seems to freeze.

MISRELL

And?

14. CLOSE SHOT WILLIAMS
WILLIAMS

And he's taking the automobile account with him.

15. PAN SHOT DOWN THE FACES OF THE MEN

At the table as each seems to catch his breath and then look from Misrell and with great compassion and concern over toward Williams.

MISRELL

Did you hear what I said, Williams? That account represented a gross billing of something in the neighborhood of three million dollars a year. And how many times have you promised it to me?

WILLIAMS

(clears his throat and for a moment can't get a word out)

This is as much of a shock to me as it is to you, Mr.

Misrell.

MISRELL

(roaring)

Don't con me, Williams! It was your pet project! Your pet project! Then it was your idea to give it to that little college greeny! Now get with it, Williams. Get with it, boy!

(he rises from his seat and goes to the window, his jowled, fleshy face screwed up like a little baby about to cry; now he whirls around toward Williams, points a finger at him)



So what's left, Williams? Not only has your pet project backfired but it's sprouted wings and left the premises! I'll tell you what's left to us in my view! A deep and abiding concern about your judgment in men!

16. PAN SHOT DOWN THE FACES OF THE MEN

Each of whom look down at their hands in a vast, biting embarrassment.

17. CLOSE SHOT WILLIAMS

As he closes his eyes for a moment, feels the sweat on his forehead and then unconsciously massages his stomach as an ulcer deep inside lights a match to his insides.

18. CLOSE SHOT MISRELL

As he returns to the table, pounds the flats of his hands down on it.

MISRELL

This is a push business, Williams! A push, push, push business. Push and drive, but personally. You

don't delegate responsibilities to little boys.

19. CLOSE SHOT WILLIAMS

As he looks sick.

MISRELL'S VOICE

You should know it more than anyone else.

The CAMERA DOLLIES in for an EXTREMELY TIGHT, TIGHT CLOSE SHOT of MISRELL'S FACE shooting at just the NOSE and LITTLE OVAL MOUTH that goes up and down and up and down. MISRELL

A push, push, push business, Williams. It's push, push, push all the way. All the time. Right on down the line—

20. EXTREMELY TIGHT

CLOSE SHOT WILLIAMS

As suddenly he can't stand it any longer and shouts out.

WILLIAMS

Fat boy, why don't you shut your mouth!

21.-25. SERIES OF ABRUPT CUTS FROM FACE TO FACE

Of the men at the table, then Misrell, then Williams who

suddenly exhales and realizes that the voice that suddenly exploded in the room like shrapnel was his own!

25A. INSERT COFFEE CUP drops to floor.

26. DIFFERENT ANGLE WILLIAMS

As he closes his eyes for a moment, grabs at his stomach very tightly as once again the ulcer makes an assault on him, then he turns and walks quietly out of the room.

CUT TO:

27. EXT. CONFERENCE ROOM A LINE OF DESKS

Two secretaries whisper to one another as he goes past them.

28. TRACK SHOT WILLIAMS

As he continues to walk through the office.

CUT TO:

29. INT. DIFFERENT OFFICE AREA

Williams's secretary, Helen, sits at a desk and looks up as Williams approaches. She forces a smile.

HELEN

Messages on the desk, boss. And hot coffee out here. Can

A Stop At Willoughby

I bring you some?
He shakes his head and starts toward the door.

HELEN

Want anything at all?
He turns from the door and stares at her.

WILLIAMS

Yeah. A sharp razor and a chart of the human anatomy showing where all the arteries are!

He goes into the office and slams the door behind him.

30.INT. WILLIAMS'S OFFICE

Fluorescent tube lighting is on all around the room and the first thing he does is flick off the switch putting the room into a semi-darkness. Then he walks over to a big, modern, expensive-looking desk, looks briefly at the picture of a beautiful woman on it, then sits down behind the desk and stares down at nothing. Over this tableau we hear the Narrator's voice.

NARRATOR'S VOICE

This is Gart Williams, age thirty-eight, a man protected by a suit of armor all held together by one bolt. Just a moment ago, someone removed the bolt and Mr. Williams's protection fell away from him and left him a naked target. He's been cannonaded this afternoon by all the enemies of his life. His insecurity has shelled him; his sensitivity has straddled him with humiliation; his deep-rooted disquiet about his own worth has zeroed in on him, landed on target, and blown him apart. Mr. Gart Williams, ad agency exec, who in just a moment will move into the Twilight Zone in a desperate search for survival!

FADE TO BLACK

OPENING BILLBOARD
FIRST COMMERCIAL

FADE ON:

31.INT. COMMUTER TRAIN NIGHT LONG SHOT DOWN LENGTH OF ONE OF CARS

A conductor comes into the frame from behind the camera collecting the tickets of the few passengers who remain. DOLLY IN with him toward Williams who sits by himself at the far end of the car. Conductor takes his ticket, punches it.

32.TWO SHOT THE TWO MEN

CONDUCTOR ONE

How are you tonight, Mr. Williams?

WILLIAMS

(looks up, tiredly, with a wry grin)

In the absolute pink!

He turns and looks out toward the wintry, dark landscape.

CONDUCTOR ONE

Cold winter this year. Seems to get darker earlier than it ever has.

WILLIAMS

(nods)

That's the way of the world. The rich get richer and the days get shorter!

The conductor chuckles, sticks the ticket into the slot in the back of the seat facing Williams, then continues out of the car.

33.CLOSE SHOT WILLIAMS

As he leans back in the chair. His face looks tired and wan. He takes a deep breath and closes his eyes. In his subconscious he hears the voice first of Misrell and then other voices that spring up from his subconscious. Over the tight, close shot of his face the voices come in filtered, discordantly loud, real and yet somehow a step beyond reality.

MISRELL'S VOICE

It's a push, push, push business, Williams. It's an

absolutely push, push, push business. It's a push, push, push business. You got to get with it, boy. It's a push, push, push business. You got to get with it, boy. It's a push, push, push business. You got to get with it, boy.

34.DIFFERENT TIGHT ANGLE WILLIAMS'S FACE

As his eyes go open and he shouts out.

WILLIAMS

That's enough!

35.REVERSE ANGLE LOOKING OVER HIS SHOULDER AT WOMAN IN FRONT OF HIM

Who turns around, wide-eyed, and stares at him.

36.DIFFERENT ANGLE WILLIAMS

As he turns away from her to stare out the window of the train.

37.ANGLE SHOT OVER HIS SHOULDER

At the wintry landscape outside in the darkness. His eyes close as he leans his head out the window and after a moment lets his head rest on the back of the seat, his eyes closed. The sound of the train comes up to provide a humming clickety clack sound as the CAMERA MOVES IN for an angle shot looking down from over the head of Williams as he falls asleep. Gradually the sound of the train takes on a different tone. It's imperceptible at first and then very obvious, almost as if the train were going through a tunnel and there was an echo effect. Lights shoot by playing on Williams's face and on the interior of the train. The CAMERA STARTS A SLOW PAN DOWN until it's directly in front of Williams, shooting on him. Then the CAMERA PULLS BACK to reveal an absolutely empty car and suddenly the entire car is suffused by

sunlight and then the train is suddenly coming to a stop. DOLLY IN FOR CLOSE SHOT OF WILLIAMS as his eyes open and suddenly blink, he takes a deep breath, looks at his watch, then looks out the window.

38. DIFFERENT ANGLE WILLIAMS'S FACE

As he suddenly starts in amazement. SLOW PAN SHOT up from him to a SHOT OUT THE WINDOW. Outside it is suddenly bright and sunny and obviously summer. The train has stopped in front of a small railroad station with a big sign which reads "Willoughby."

39. CLOSE SHOT WILLIAMS

As again he starts and stares.

40. LONG SHOT LOOKING OUT THE WINDOW

Of the train station. There are horse-drawn carriages. Women with parasols and long dresses. Men in obvious nineteenth-century costume. Little boys with knickers run back and forth. One carries a fishing pole.

41. DIFFERENT ANGLE LOOKING DOWN THE STREET

As seen from the train car. A bandstand, carriages, all the accoutrements to a quiet summer day of almost a century ago.

42. CLOSE SHOT WILLIAMS

As his eyes scan the scene. He shakes his head in bewilderment, amazement.

43. DIFFERENT ANGLE OF HIM INSIDE TRAIN

As he rises, walks halfway down the car, staring out of the windows as he walks.

44. LONG SHOT OVER HIS SHOULDER

As the far door of the car opens. A conductor comes in, this one in old-fashioned dress. He smiles at Williams and calls out in a trainman's voice.

CONDUCTOR TWO

Willoughby. This stop is Willoughby!

He starts to walk past Williams who grabs him.

WILLIAMS

What do you mean, Willoughby? Where's Willoughby?

CONDUCTOR TWO

(grins and winks)

Willoughby? That's

Willoughby right outside.

Williams whirls around to stare out the window again, then turns toward the conductor.

WILLIAMS

Wait a minute . . . wait a minute, what's going on? There's no place called Willoughby on this line.

anyway? It's November! What is this place? Where are we? What's happened?

45. DIFFERENT ANGLE THE CONDUCTOR

As he releases himself and continues to walk down the car.

46. REVERSE ANGLE LOOKING OVER HIS SHOULDER

Toward Williams who stands there staring after him.

47. REVERSE ANGLE LOOKING TOWARD CONDUCTOR WILLIAMS'S P.O.V.

WILLIAMS

Please . . . please, what's going on? Where is Willoughby?



And look at it outside. The sun is out. It's . . . it's summer.

CONDUCTOR TWO
(smiles)

That's what she is, mid-July! And a real warm one, too.

He starts to walk past and again Williams has to grab him and stop him.

WILLIAMS

Wait a minute . . . it's November. What's going on

48. MED. CLOSE SHOT THE CONDUCTOR

As he smiles again but this time with a touch of seriousness on his face and a kind of mysterious tilt of his head. He winks.

CONDUCTOR TWO

Willoughby, sir? That's Willoughby right outside. Willoughby. July. Summer. It's 1888. It's a lovely little village.

(and then the smile fades and

A Stop At Willoughby

there's something intense in his voice)

You ought to try it sometime! Peaceful, restful, where a man can slow down to a walk and live his life full measure!

(then he turns and calls out again)

Willoughby. This stop is Willoughby.

He continues out the opposite door.

49. DIFFERENT ANGLE WILLIAMS

As he races down the length of the car to follow the conductor. He yanks open the door.

CUT TO:

50. SHOT OVER HIS SHOULDER OF THE PLATFORM BETWEEN CARS

Which is empty, and beyond it a window leading to the next car which is also empty of anyone.

51. CLOSE SHOT WILLIAMS

As he turns around and is tight on camera. His face is twisted and torn with confusion. His mouth opens as if to protest or question or plead for someone to give him understanding and clarity. Suddenly the train lurches and he falls against the side of the door, clutching it for support. Then very slowly he turns and walks back to his seat.

52. TRACK SHOT WITH HIM AS HE WALKS

And sits down. He looks out of the window.

53. MOVING SHOT FROM INSIDE THE TRAIN

As the train moves and leaves the town and station behind. The CAMERA DOLLIES IN FOR EXTREMELY TIGHT CLOSE SHOT OF WILLIAMS as he stares out the window and then suddenly the light pattern changes. The interior lights of the train take over

and it is now dark and wintry and there are other people in the car. The conductor that we've seen in the beginning comes by.

CONDUCTOR ONE

Westport-Saugatuck next stop.

(he pauses by Williams)

Have a good sleep, Mr. Williams?

WILLIAMS

(starts and looks up at him)

Yeah.

(after a pause, quietly)

Yeah, I had a good sleep. A good sleep with an idiotic dream. Idiotic.

(he turns to stare out the window)

At least ... at least I guess it's idiotic.

(then he turns to look up toward conductor)

Ever hear of a town named Willoughby?

CONDUCTOR ONE

(screws up his face thoughtfully)

Willoughby? Willoughby where?

WILLIAMS

Willoughby, Connecticut, I guess. Or Willoughby, New York.

CONDUCTOR ONE

(shakes his head thoughtfully)

No, not on this run.

(he moves)

There's no Willoughby on the line.

(then he continues on, yelling)

Westport-Saugatuck next stop. Westport-Saugatuck.

He disappears through the car door as the CAMERA PANS OVER to Williams. He rises very slowly to his feet, picks up his briefcase, starts out the car as we

DISSOLVE TO:

54. EXT. SUBURBAN RANCH HOME NIGHT SPRAWLING VERY PRETENTIOUS LOOKING MODERN HOME.

DISSOLVE TO:

55. INT. LIVING ROOM-DEN

Williams stands by a small bar pouring himself a large highball. He stirs the ice and very reflectively takes a sip of it. He turns as the light from the hall outside is suddenly ushered into the room with the door opening.

56. MED. CLOSE SHOT MIRROR BEHIND THE BAR

Framed there is the reflection of Williams's wife, Jane. She stands there frozen in place in the doorway looking across at him, accusing. This is a beautiful woman. But beautiful like alabaster—just as cold, just as brittle, just as lacking in emotion. She walks slowly across the room toward him.

57. DIFFERENT ANGLE THE TWO OF THEM

JANE

And what are your plans this evening? To get quietly plastered and then sing old college songs?

WILLIAMS

(smiles at her a little wanly)
It's been one of those days—

JANE

I know all about it. Bob Blair's wife called me. She said he'd been in the meeting with you. You got ... you got hysterical or something. She called to find out how you were.

58. MED. CLOSE SHOT WILLIAMS

As he turns away, smiles.

WILLIAMS

They were all very solicitous—all the boys at the meeting.

(he looks down into his glass and jiggles the ice)

That free-flowing compassion that is actually

relief! I'm the victim—not them! They've mistaken an intake of breath for an outpouring of sympathy!

He starts to pour himself another drink. She crosses over and grabs his arm, looking straight into his face, her own face white and taut.

JANE

Would you spare me your little homilies now and just give me a little simple and frank and honest answer. Did you wreck a career this afternoon? Did you throw away a job?

WILLIAMS

It appears not. Mr. Misrell phoned before I left the office. He has found it in that giant, oversize heart of his to forgive. This somewhat obese, gracious gentleman will allow me to continue in his employ simply because he's such a human-type fellow—

a pause—

With a small, insignificant, parenthetical additional reason—that if I were to go to competitive agency, I might possibly take a lot of business with me

JANE

Go on.

WILLIAMS
shrugs

That's it. That's all of it. He carries his drink across the room and sits down in a chair.

I'm tired, Janie. I'm tired, and I'm sick.

JANE

(from across the room)

Then you're in the right ward! We specialize in people who are sick and tired too, Gert. I'm sick and tired of a husband who lives in a kind of permanent self-pity! A husband with a heart bleeding sensitivity he

unfurls like a flag whenever he decides that the competition is too rough for him.

59. CLOSE SHOT WILLIAMS

As his head goes up and he stares across the room at her.

WILLIAMS

Some people aren't built for competition, Janie.
(he rises and walks halfway over to her)

Or big pretentious houses that they can't afford. Or rich communities they don't feel comfortable in. Or country clubs that they wear around their necks like a badge of status—

JANE

(on her feet, shouts at him)

And you would prefer—

WILLIAMS

(outshouting her now)

I would prefer, though never asked before, a job, any job—any job at all where I could be myself! Where I wouldn't have to climb on a stage and go through a masquerade every morning at nine and mouth all the dialogue and play the executive and make—believe I'm the bright young man on his way up. Because I'm not that person, Janie. You've tried to make me that person, but that isn't me.

(now his voice is quieter as he turns away from her)

That isn't me at all. I'm . . . I'm a not very young, soon to be old, very uncompetitive, rather dull, quite uninspired, average type of guy—

(he whirls around toward her)

With a wife who has an appetite!

JANE

And where would you be if it weren't for my appetite?

60. CLOSE SHOT WILLIAMS

As his eyes drop. He walks over to the chair and sits down.

WILLIAMS

I know where I'd like to be.
JANE

(challenging, her voice brittle and shrill)

And where would that be?

He looks up at her. The CAMERA MOVES IN VERY CLOSE TO HIS FACE.

WILLIAMS

A place called Willoughby. A little town that I chartered inside my head. A place I manufactured in a dream.
(he looks away from her now, speaks softly and reflectively, almost as if to himself)

An odd dream. A very odd dream. Willoughby. It was summer. Very warm. The kids were barefooted. One of them carried a fishing pole. And the main street looked like . . . looked like a Currier and Ives painting. Bandstand, old-fashioned stores, bicycles, wagons.

(he looks toward her again)

I've never seen such a . . . such a serenity. It was the way people must have lived a hundred years ago.

(a pause as he looks away again)

Crazy dream.

61. MOVING SHOT JANE

As she walks over to him.

62. ANGLE SHOT LOOKING UP AT HER

Her face is distorted with an impatience, a frustration, a deep-rooted and abiding lack of respect for the man, in addition to the sense of impotence on her part. She turns and starts out of the room.

63. DIFFERENT ANGLE THE ROOM

As Williams rises.

WILLIAMS

Janie—

A Stop At Willoughby



She stops at the door, her back to him.

64. REVERSE ANGLE LOOKING OVER HER SHOULDER

Toward him. His voice is soft and with a strange quality of hunger and yearning.

WILLIAMS

You should have seen this place ... this ... this Willoughby. Janie, it wasn't just a place ... or a time ...

(a pause)

It was like ... a doorway that leads to sanity. A soundproof world where shouts and cries can't be heard.

65. CLOSE SHOT JANE

JANE

(her words like pieces of ice)

Nothing serious, Gart. It's just that you were born too late. That's the problem. You were born too late. And your taste is a little cheap! You're the kind of man who could be satisfied with a summer afternoon and an ice wagon pulled by a horse. My mistake, pal. My error. My miserable tragic error.

To get married to a man whose big dream in life is to be Huckleberry Finn! That is what you want, isn't it?

66. EXTREMELY TIGHT CLOSE SHOT WILLIAMS

WILLIAMS

Something like that. A place ... a time ... where a man can live his life full measure.

(he turns away thoughtfully, softly)

That's what he said. That's what that ... that conductor said. A place where a man can live his life full measure!

DISSOLVE TO:

67. INT. TRAIN NIGHT CLOSE SHOT WILLIAMS

Sitting in his customary seat. Over his shoulder we see the landscape outside cloaked by wintry night, occasional lights flashing by. He stirs when he hears the conductor's voice.

CONDUCTOR ONE'S VOICE

Willoughby?

CAMERA PULLS BACK FOR TWO SHOT

WILLIAMS

What?

CONDUCTOR ONE

Last week you asked me about a town called

Willoughby, Mr. Williams. (he scratches his jaw)

I looked it up. Every old timetable I could find.

(he shakes his head)

No such place as far as I could see.

WILLIAMS

(forcing a smile)

Thanks. It was a dream, that's all.

CONDUCTOR ONE

(continuing on down the car)

Probably was.

(calling out)

Next stop, Stamford.

Stamford next stop.

68. DIFFERENT ANGLE WILLIAMS

As he puts his head back, sighs deeply, looks out the window briefly and closes his eyes. In the background we hear the conductor's voice once again calling out.

CONDUCTOR ONE'S VOICE

Stamford next stop.

Stamford.

69. EXTREMELY TIGHT CLOSE SHOT WILLIAMS'S FACE DAY

As once again the conductor's voice segues into that of the other conductor and gradually gets louder.

CONDUCTOR TWO'S VOICE

Willoughby. Next stop,

Willoughby.

Once again Williams's eyes open wide. He springs to his feet and stares out the window. Once again the car is of an old-fashioned variety and empty save for the conductor who approaches him walking down the aisle.

CONDUCTOR TWO

Willoughby, sir.

70. DIFFERENT ANGLE WILLIAMS

Willoughby?

He turns to stare out the window again.

**71. LONG SHOT OVER HIS
SHOULDER OF RAILROAD
STATION AND TOWN
BEYOND**

This time a band plays in the bandstand at the far end of the street and there's the sound of laughter, horses, an organ grinder—all of them fusing together to provide a kind of soft symphony.

**72. MOVING SHOT
WILLIAMS**

As he goes out of the car to the train platform.

**73. REVERSE ANGLE
LOOKING UP AT HIM**

From outside as he stops there. The conductor passes behind him heading for the next car.

CONDUCTOR TWO

Willoughby. All out for Willoughby.

**74. ZOOMAR INTO
WILLIAMS'S FACE**

As he stands there transfixed, obviously on a thin line now between disbelief and resolve. He makes a motion as if to get off the train, then stops, looks down to the ground, then he's thrown off balance by the sudden jerk of the train starting.

**75. MOVING SHOT
THE TRAIN**

With Williams standing on the platform. The moment of decision has passed and he has obviously retreated.

**76. DIFFERENT ANGLE
THE TRAIN PLATFORM**

As Williams turns away, stands there for a moment as the train picks up speed, slowly raises his head to look into the train car from which he's come.

**77. LONG SHOT HIS P.O.V.
NIGHT**

Once again it is filled with people and is no longer old-fashioned.

**78. DIFFERENT ANGLE
WILLIAMS**

As he whirls around to stare out from the platform to the outside.

**79. SHOT OVER HIS
SHOULDER**

Of the landscape going by. Once again it is wintry and dark.

80. CLOSE SHOT WILLIAMS

As he closes his eyes, swallows and is beset not only by bewilderment, but by an odd, haunting sense of having lost another chance.

81. MOVING SHOT WITH HIM

As he goes into the car and to his seat. He looks out at the passing landscape and then at the reflection of himself in the glass. His lips move and after a moment we can hear what he's saying.

WILLIAMS

(softly, to himself)

Willoughby. Next time ... next time ... I'm going to get off!

(he turns to face the camera, his face determined and grim)

I'm going to get off
at Willoughby!

FADE TO BLACK

ACT TWO

FADE ON:

**82. INT. WILLIAMS'S OFFICE
DAY EXTREMELY
TIGHT ANGLE SHOT OF A
TELEPHONE RECEIVER**

In front of Williams's face. We hear the filtered but strident voice of Misrell.

MISRELL

What we need here, Williams, is a show with zazz! An entertainer with moxie! We've got to take the audience by the ears and give 'em a yank! Jar 'em! Rock 'em! Give them the old push, push, push!

WILLIAMS

(closing his eyes)

I understand, Mr. Misrell.

**83. PAN SHOT DOWN
WILLIAMS'S BODY**

After first seeing his face convulse in sudden agonizing pain. Now his right hand moves inside his shirt to touch his stomach as the ulcer once again rakes over his inside.

MISRELL'S VOICE

Now it's got to be bright, Williams. Bright with patter. Dancing. Comedy. And everything push, push, push, push. That's the kind of show the client'll like.

**84. MED. CLOSE SHOT
WILLIAMS**

WILLIAMS

I understand, Mr. Misrell. I understand—

MISRELL'S VOICE

Tomorrow morning, Williams! Understand? I want at least a preliminary idea for the show. You know what I want—just a rough format with some specifics as to how we integrate the commercials within the body of the show.

**85. DIFFERENT ANGLE
WILLIAMS**

WILLIAMS

I'll do what I can.

**86. CLOSE SHOT PHONE
RECEIVER**

MISRELL'S VOICE

Do more than you can. With me, Williams? Aspire! Dream big and then get behind it. Push, push, push, push.

Williams moves the phone away from him during the speech so that we are on the telephone listening to "push, push, push, push."

**87. DIFFERENT ANGLE
WILLIAMS**

As he lays down the receiver and once again his hand massages his stomach. He looks pale and sick and inundated by pain. The phone



rings. He picks it up. We hear a filtered voice blabbering at him. The words unintelligible, but the sense of the urgency very much in evidence.

WILLIAMS

(tryint to interject at odd moments)

Well, I haven't seen the ratings on the show ... no ... no ... well it was the time slot the sponsor wanted -

Another phone rings.

WILLIAMS

(into the first phone)

Hold on just a second, will you.

(he pushes a button and talks into the other line)

Yes? They were what?

Wait a second.

(he shouts out)

Helen?

88. LONG SHOT THE DOOR

As the secretary appears.

WILLIAMS

What film outfit did the commercials on the Bradbury account? The negatives are all scratched. They're screaming bloody murder at me.

HELEN

I'll have to check it, sir.

Mr. Misrell would like to see you.

The voice on the phone suddenly comes in loud and strident.

WILLIAMS

I'm going to have to check it out for you here -

HELEN

Mr. Misrell, sir.

The voice continues on the line.

HELEN

Mr. Williams, Mr. Misrell seemed rather insistent -

89. CLOSE SHOT WILLIAMS

As his face suddenly seems very pale. The voices continue to probe at him.

90. MOVING SHOT WITH HIM

As he crosses the room almost like some kind of automaton, walks into the small private bathroom adjoining the office, stands in front of the mirror. The camera moves up for a shot of the reflection of his office over his shoulder. The phones on the desk jabber and ring, jabber and ring.

91. REVERSE ANGLE LOOKING TOWARD WILLIAMS'S FACE

As he stares at himself. All the time the phones and voices seem to reach a crescendo and screech at him.

CUT TO:

92. SHOT OF MISRELL'S FACE IN THE MIRROR

The fleshy jowled features, the piggish eyes, the lips that move up and down, up and down.

MISRELL

(in the mirror)

Push, push, push, Williams.

Push, push, push, Williams.

Push, push, push, Williams.

93. PROFILE SHOT WILLIAMS

As his features contort and suddenly he takes the flats of both hands and smashes the mirror, breaking it into a hundred pieces. At this moment all noise stops and there is dead and utter silence.

94. MED. CLOSE SHOT WILLIAMS

As he turns to face the camera, his mouth twitching,

his eyes shut.

WILLIAMS

No more! No more—in God's name ... no more!

95. TRACK SHOT

WILLIAMS

As he runs across the room, flicks off the lights, leans against the wall for a moment. Then he turns and retraces his steps back to the desk, picks up the phone, dials a number.

WILLIAMS

I'd like Westport, Connecticut, please. Capital 7-9899. Yes, please.

(he waits for a moment)

Janie, this is Gert, honey. Stay there, will you please? I just want you to stay there. I'm coming home.

(a pause as he listens to her obviously arguing)

Janie ... Janie, please listen....

(then shouting)

Janie! I've had it.

Understand? I've had it. I can't go on for another day.

I can't go on for another hour. This is it right now.

I've got to get out of here.

(another pause)

Janie.

(close to tears)

Janie, help me, will you.

Please ... please help me.

Janie?

(a pause)

Janie?

He clicks the receiver then listens to what is obviously a dead line. He slowly replaces the receiver and, massaging his stomach, he stares at the telephone.

DISSOLVE TO:

96. INT. TRAIN

NIGHT MED. CLOSE SHOT

Williams in his seat. The conductor passes him, punches his ticket.

CONDUCTOR ONE

You're going home early tonight, huh, Mr. Williams?

Williams nods and doesn't say anything. The conductor continues on down the aisle, punching tickets. Williams moves in his seat, stares out through the window, impatiently, nervously checks his watch, then looks out the window again, rises to peer more closely out of the glass, then sits down again. His fingers twitch convulsively. He starts to take out a cigarette then looks up at a sign over the door.

97. CLOSE SHOT THE SIGN

"No Smoking"

98. ANGLE SHOT LOOKING DOWN FROM THE SIGN TOWARD WILLIAMS

Who starts to put the cigarettes away in his pocket then drops them.



99. TOP HAT SHOT FROM ACROSS THE AISLE LOOKING STRAIGHT TOWARD THE FLOOR BY WILLIAMS

As he bends down to pick up the cigarettes. The conductor's voice is heard.

CONDUCTOR ONE'S VOICE

Stamford next stop. Stamford.

100. EXTREMELY TIGHT CLOSE SHOT CIGARETTES

Suddenly bathed in sunlight. PAN SHOT UP until we're on a LONG ANGLE LOOKING UP at Williams's face as suddenly it is bathed in sunlight. He has a smile that is almost ethereal.

CONDUCTOR TWO'S VOICE

Willoughby next stop.

Willoughby!

101. DIFFERENT ANGLE WILLIAMS

As he jumps to his feet and shouts.

WILLIAMS

Willoughby! That's where I get off. Willoughby! That's my station!

CONDUCTOR TWO

(just coming alongside, smiles and winks)

Yes, sir. That's your station, Willoughby.

102. EXT. TRAIN STATION

Looking toward the car that Williams is in as we can see him walking through the doors to the platform then down the steps and toward the camera. Two boys pass carrying fishing rods.

A Stop At Willoughby



BOY ONE

Hi, Mr. Williams.

BOY TWO

Hi, Mr. Williams.

103. CLOSE SHOT WILLIAMS

First mystified, then overjoyed.

WILLIAMS

Hi, boys. Catch some big ones today, huh? I think tomorrow I'll join you.

BOY ONE

Plenty of room! And lotsa fish.

They continue on.

104. LONG SHOT MAN ON A WAGON

As he waves.

MAN

Hi, Mr. Williams. Welcome!

WILLIAMS

Thank you. Thank you ... I'm ... I'm glad to be here.

105. MOVING SHOT WILLIAMS

As he goes beyond the station, heading toward the main street. We can see and hear people greeting him and welcoming him.

106. DIFFERENT ANGLE WILLIAMS

As he walks toward the camera and is suddenly

surrounded by people, all in period dress, who walk with him.

107. ANGLE SHOT LOOKING AT CLOCK IN STORE WINDOW

As Williams passes. There in the window is a grandfather clock. The CAMERA MOVES IN VERY TIGHT on it until we see the pendulum going back and forth. CAMERA CONTINUES TO DOLLY in on the pendulum.

108. DIFFERENT ANGLE THE PENDULUM

As it swings.

LAP DISSOLVE TO:

109. EXT. FIELD NIGHT CLOSE ON LANTERN

That swings back and forth in the same cadence as the grandfather clock. The CAMERA MOVES until it is shooting down on the body of Gart Williams who lies face up in the snow, a white coated intern leaning over him and beyond the intern two trainmen, one of whom holds the lantern. The intern rises, motions to another attendant. They lift the body of Williams to a stretcher and start to

carry it out of the scene.

TRAINMAN ONE

Just jumped off the train, did he?

CONDUCTOR

Shouted somethin' about.

Willoughby, ran out to the platform and that's the last I seen him. Doctor said he musta died instantly.

They're gonna take him into town for an autopsy.

Funeral parlor there sent the ambulance.

TRAINMAN ONE

Poor fellow.

110. ANGLE SHOT LOOKING DOWN ON THE INTERN AND THE ATTENDANT

Carrying the body over to a waiting ambulance.

111. DIFFERENT ANGLE LOOKING TOWARD THE REAR END OF THE AMBULANCE

Its back door is wide open. The stretcher is lifted gently and through into the back. Then the attendant closes both the doors and the CAMERA ZOOMS IN for a CLOSE SHOT of the lettering on the back of the doors which reads, "WILLOUGHBY AND SON, FUNERAL HOME." CAMERA STAYS on this shot for a long, long moment, then the ambulance's engine is started, thrown into gear and it moves off into the darkness. The CAMERA SLOWLY PANS UP toward the sky as we hear the Narrator's Voice.

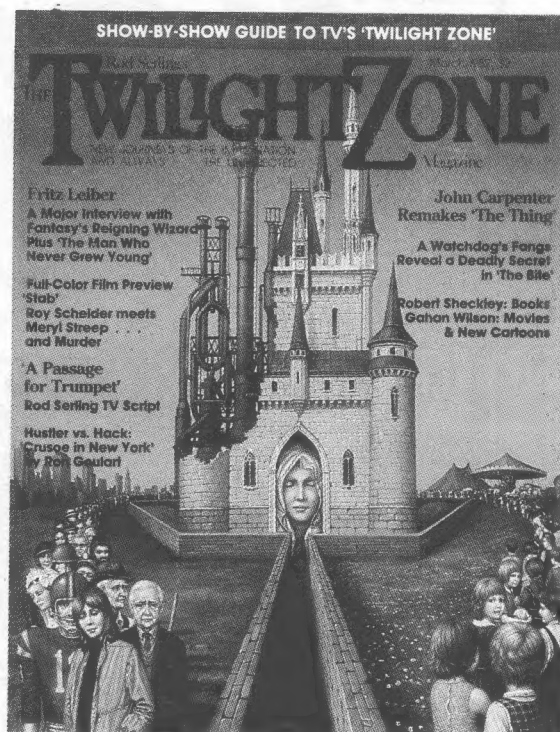
NARRATOR'S VOICE

Mr. Gart Williams, who sought respite from torment under a gravestone; who climbed on a world that went by too fast and then ... jumped off. Mr. Gart Williams, who might now tell us what awaits us in the beyond ... because this, too, is a part of ... The Twilight Zone!

FADE TO BLACK

THE END

In the March TZ ...



You'll find an interview with fantasy's grand master, an advance look at two highly unusual new movies, and a royal helping of the strangest fiction ever assembled ... The grand master is **Fritz Leiber**, a man of Lincolnesque proportions with a giant talent, a limitless imagination, and a shelf full of Hugos, Nebulas, and World Fantasy Awards. He offers a candied self-portrait in March's TZ Interview. It's accompanied by a little-known Leiber classic, **THE MAN WHO NEVER GREW YOUNG**: a unique, totally unforgettable tale that encompasses the full sweep of human history ... You'll get a sneak preview of **STAB**, the classy new thriller from *Bonnie and Clyde*'s **Robert Benton** and **David Newman**, in which **Meryl Streep** plays the suspect in a modern-day Jack-the-Ripper murder case, with **Roy Scheider** as a psychiatrist who falls in love with her ... And you'll tour the set where **John Carpenter** is filming a remake of **THE THING**—which, this time around, sticks closer to the terrifying John W. Campbell story and stars **Kurt Russell** (of Carpenter's *Escape from New York*) ... **Ron Goulart** contributes a wry glimpse of science fiction's heroes, hustlers, and hacks in **CRUSOE IN NEW YORK** ... **Robert E. Vardeman** provides an ingenious explanation for New York's rising crime rate in **INCIDENT ON PARK BENCH 37** ... **Mad dog!** Or maybe he's just sick. At any rate, he's acting *very* oddly: he refuses to open his mouth. Find out why in **THE BITE**, a gripping little chiller by **Elizabeth Morton** ... Terror of a more universal sort pervades **SLEEP** by **Steve Rasnic Tem**, which may not make you afraid to turn off the lights and go to bed—but may make you afraid to wake up!

March's TZ also features the original script—complete with photographs—of **A PASSAGE FOR TRUMPET**, Rod Serling's classic **TWILIGHT ZONE** episode, starring **Jack Klugman** as a down-and-out jazz musician ... And forget the Maltese Falcon! **Larry Tritten** takes you on a madcap search across 21st-century San Francisco for **THREE BANANAS**, and it's the weirdest private-eye caper you've ever seen ... Madman—or black messiah? **BREAKTHROUGH**, by **Richard Stooker**, presents the frightening case history of a young psychopath who just might save the world—if he doesn't destroy it first! ... **THE NEW MAN**, by **Barbara Owens**, presents another situation right out of *The Twilight Zone*: a reformed alcoholic is confronted by a twelve-year-old boy who calls him "Dad" and appears to be part of the family—but the man is sure he's never seen this boy before ... **Earthmen are nuts!** Or they're going to be—because the alien in this story turns out to be a screw: a 3/4-15x2 hex-head cap screw, to be exact, with two tiny eyes, a grease smudge of a mouth, and a remarkably nasty sense of humor. The joke's on all of us in **THE RETURN OF THE SCREW** by **Kevin Cook** ... **Jack Sullivan** offers a new installment of his consumer's guide to spectral music ... You'll find lively reviews of the latest books and films by **Robert Sheckley** and **Gahan Wilson**, and this time you'll get a look at some of Gahan's brand new cartoons from his forthcoming collection, *Is Nothing Sacred?* ... **Marc Scott Zicree's SHOW-BY-SHOW GUIDE** will take a look at *The Twilight Zone's* hour-long episodes ... All this in the March TZ: a lot of good reading for two little dollars.